

THE BOYHOOD OF JOHN KENT

WILLIS BOYD ALLEN

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"John," said Gilbert, wheeling round suddenly, and gazing into the shadows out of which shone his boy's big gray eyes, "do you want to go?" — *Page 34.*

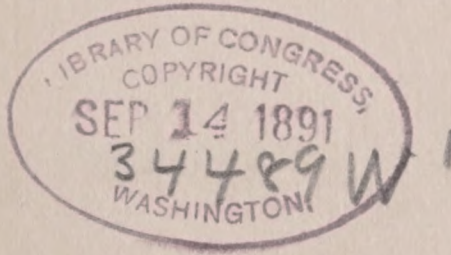


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want to

THE
BOYHOOD OF JOHN KENT

BY
WILLIS BOYD ALLEN

Author of "The Pine Cone Stories," "Christmas at Surf Point," "The Red Mountain of Alaska," "The Lion City of Africa," etc.



BOSTON AND CHICAGO
Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society

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TO

My Father,

With deepest Gratitude, Respect, and

Love,

I offer this Book.

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THE BOYHOOD OF JOHN KENT.

CHAPTER I.

FATHER AND SON.

ON a certain winter night, when the darkness all around was as black and soft as velvet, and not a star shone in its folds; when the north-east wind blew steadily and drove myriads of tiny, crystallized snowflakes before it so swiftly that they seemed never to reach the earth at all, but just to whiz past, and off into the sky again; when the air was bitter cold, and even the snow on the ground looked warm, as one thought of the small leaved plants, the spiders and beetles and ants it sheltered, lying snug and close in their tiny homes, — on this winter night, just after midnight, John Kent stood before a blazing fire, built in the edge of a pine forest, and tried to warm his small hands over the restless red

flame that would blow in exactly the wrong direction, and either puff smoke in his face or roar away toward the tall, silent trunks of the pines, as if its whole duty were to warm them instead of the shivering, half-benumbed boy on the other side.

“Poor little fellow! What will he do without a mother?”

Those were the first words that John could ever remember in his life. He never forgot them.

“How old are ye, bub?” asked the same voice, in tones so full of sympathy, rough and harsh though they were, that John really began to think that something was the matter.

“Five, sir; ’most six,” said he, his lip trembling, as he looked up into the face bending over him.

“Poor little chap,” repeated the voice. Then there was a whispered consultation, the first speaker’s bright buttons gleaming in the fire-light as he held his hand absent-mindedly over the fire.

“Yer father’ll be along soon. He built the fire fer ye, did n’t he?”

“Yes, sir; he told me to stay right here.”

John was trying hard not to cry. He was conscious of a great longing for his father to come. Indeed, he placed nearly all his wants, at that time of his life, in one class. Every need resolved itself somehow into a temporary lack of *father*. If he were cold (as he was now, very) he felt vaguely that father meant warmth; when he was hungry for food, he got the feeling all mixed up with hunger for father; to be without father was his unexpressed definition, somewhere in the sweet, morning mistiness of his waking child-ideas, of death.

What had happened that afternoon and evening, before the words of the kind-hearted brakeman fell on his ears, he could not remember. When he was old enough to understand, a few years later, he was told that he had been traveling from the old farm-home toward the city with his father and mother. Why they left the pretty trees and cows and snowbirds to go to a place all stones and bricks, he could not fully make out till he was older still; for what should he know of debts and mortgages, of poor crops, foreclosures and auctions?

At any rate, there they were, they three — the whole family — rattling along through a white

world, with blots of dark woods beside them, and booms of hollow bridges beneath them, on and on, until it was dark, and the pleasant brakeman had come through the car, lighting the lamps, and telling of the big snowdrifts they must go through.

At about this time he had become very sleepy, and, laying his head in his father's lap, had forgotten all the little remembers he had—and they were very short ones—in sleep, when there had come a crash somewhere, a dull pounding underneath the car, shaking him dreadfully, then another crash, in the midst of which the car tipped over, his mother disappeared, and he presently found himself, still in his father's arms, lying in a most uncomfortable, upside-down way, with something heavy on his feet.

It was very, very dark. Snowflakes blew in from the great, cold night and brushed his face.

The something heavy was at length lifted from his feet; lifted and carried tenderly away by men with lanterns. He could not see what it was, but he heard a groan burst from his father's lips.

His little hands were upon the man's bearded face in a moment.

“Does it hurt you, father?”

Mr. Kent only replied by kissing the hand in the darkness. He did not dare to move, as a portion of the car roof rested unevenly on the shattered edge of the seat just above him, and a touch or a sudden start might bring down the whole mass upon them. All around, people were crying and calling for help.

As for John, he was not very much disturbed or uncomfortable. So long as his father's arms were around him, things could not go very badly.

Why did he not feel that way toward his mother, you ask? I am not sure; but I think she had not read the New Testament, or, what is still more necessary, practiced the Sermon on the Mount, enough to be a bit like God to her son. She was a good mother, as the world goes; that is, she clothed and fed him, and put him to bed at night with a rather hasty and formal kiss. But she never came down into his world, to live for him, and with him, to suffer for him in his little punishments and sorrows, and to rejoice with him in his childish joys. It was his father who did this daily, and who was, to some extent, one with his boy, even as he himself tried to be one with his Master.

The result was inevitable. The boy respected,

and — yes, perhaps, loved his mother a little; he *lived in* his father.

The first thing Mr. Kent had done, on being freed from the wreck of the car, was to carry John in his arms to the edge of the pine woods, only a few steps from the track, and there, brushing aside the snow as well as he could, to build a fire. All this took but a minute or two, for he was perfectly at home in the woods.

Then, bidding his son await his return, he went in search of his wife. He found the broken house she had lived in; but she herself had gone.

When he came back, his boy was standing sturdily at his post, like Casabianca of old; save that our small John Kent was well along toward freezing instead of burning.

“My boy, my precious son!” was all his father said as he gathered him in his arms.

There was something in the way these words were spoken, in the way the protecting arms came about him, that was new. There was the faintest possible accent of appeal for help, a grasp as that of a drowning man for a straw, that mingled with the protection of fatherhood. And at the same moment there was born in the swelling breast of John Kent, aged five, a feeling of father-

hood toward his own father. As they clasped each other tight in the midst of the driving storm, with the darkness about them, and the groans of the dying in the air, they were more nearly one than ever before; and the child, as well as the man, felt the sweetness of giving comfort.

There, I am glad to have gotten over the sad beginning of my story. It was better to tell you one that had the deepest shadows in the first chapter than in the last, was it not? And you could not fully understand John Kent if I left out the record of that terrible night.

I need not dwell on the rest of their journey: the wrecking train, the telegrams flashing reports of the accident all over the country, the slow progress of the cars with their freight of souls and bodies, the arrival in the city, and the lonely little funeral that had only one carriage after the hearse. Nor, indeed, would you be interested in the life of the two mourners during the next few years.

Mr. Kent was a skillful carpenter, and was pretty sure of work whenever he chose to seek for it. He earned enough to pay for his own and his boy's support in a cheap boarding-house; and spent much of his time, in the intervals of his

steady jobs, over his books, which constituted almost his only possessions, beyond what he wore on his back.

There was a carpenter's shop down by the wharves, owned by a friend, who allowed him to put up a bench and keep his tools there for a trifling commission on the pay he received. This arrangement had been made soon after the arrival in Boston, and a small sign had appeared below the larger one:—

GILBERT E. KENT. CARPENTER AND JOINER.

It was John's delight to visit this shop, and watch his father at his work. A conversation which took place when he was about nine years of age will give some idea of the relation between the two.

Kent was at work on rather a delicate piece of joiner's work, such as he loved best to do. John had been watching him intently from a special coigne of vantage which had been built for him, and which I will describe later.

“What are you building, father?—a coffin?”

“Why, no, my boy,” said the man, startled and rather worried by such an unchildlike question. “No, indeed; it’s a more cheerful job than that.”

“Why, father, when you were making one last week, I heard you tell Mr. Wilson, ‘What a great comfort it would be for the poor thing to get into it and have a good sleep!’”

“Did I?” rejoined Gilbert hastily. “Well, that was for a man who was old and had been sick a long time. He had what they call asthma, and could n’t sleep, except a little bit at a time in his chair.”

“But how could he lie down in his coffin, if he was dead, you know?” argued Kent Junior.

“Bless me, child, I should n’t have said that,” said his father, dismayed. “It’s a foolish way folks have of speaking. Poor old Collins was really never in the coffin at all; it was only his body.”

“Where was he, then?”

“With God, somewhere, my boy. In heaven, I trust.”

John was silent for a while, pondering. When he spoke it was after a long breath of relief, which seemed to indicate that his mind was at rest con-

cerning his asthmatic old neighbor. He wanted just one word more, to make assurance doubly sure.

"It's the same God we say, 'Our Father' to, is n't it, sir?"

"Yes."

"Oh, he's all right, then," said John, dismissing the subject contentedly. If old Mr. Collins were where his Father was, neither asthma nor sleeplessness could render his lot wholly bad. He had not yet learned that a man may be so warped and twisted by his sins that he won't look up and see his Father standing by him. That is indeed "outer darkness."

"But you have n't told me yet, father," resumed John, having disposed of Mr. Collins satisfactorily, "what you're making."

"It's a desk, my boy."

He was *zipping* off some sharp corners with an odd little plane.

"For Mr. Wilson?"

Mr. Wilson was the owner of the shop.

"No, son; for some rich people on Commonwealth Avenue."

"Could n't they buy one?"

"Not the kind they want. There is an old lady in the house, and she wanted a desk with a great

many little nooks and corners — secret drawers, and the like.”

“Won’t anybody know where they are?”

“No. She won’t tell anybody of them, and I promised not to.”

“Not even to me?”

“Not even to you.”

“But I can see you while you make them.”

“Oh, I don’t mind your looking on. You could n’t remember them.’

John slipped down from his perch, and dusted his little coat before going out-of-doors.

“I guess I won’t watch,” he said, “for I might remember, and then, you know, the old lady would be sorry.”

All this was said in a quiet, deliberate way which John inherited from his father. He lifted his face to be kissed, before he turned to the door.

“Good-by, father.”

“Good-by, little son.”

So the days grew into months, and the months into years. John was never sent to a public school, but he had good teaching for all that. There was a silver-haired old lady in the same boarding-house, whose mind and spirit were as

fresh and young as they had been at twenty. People do not grow old, I have to remind myself sometimes. They grow better or worse, but not older. The houses in which they live, which we call bodies, do indeed get loose-jointed and shaky and weather-beaten; but the real You and the real I, inside, remain. In heaven, perhaps, we shall always look as we feel. We should hardly dare to risk it now.

But how easily I stray from my story! Mrs. Courtley was a lady of the old school. She was Scotch by birth, and now and then a word or phrase of her childhood would slip into her fine English. She had been well educated, and could teach John to speak, read, and write his mother-tongue with true delicacy and force. As time hung heavy on her hands, she was glad to have the boy come to her room and learn at her knee, while to him such a visit was a rare treat. For that room was to him an Aladdin's cave of wonders; and Lady Courtley, as the other boarders called her, half in fun and half from genuine respect, was never tired of telling marvelous stories connected with her curiosities. Her young caller soon discovered, also, that his old friend loved to talk about their Father in heaven to

whose presence his mother and old Collins had gone. Lady Courtley was sometimes inclined to be shocked at the ideas of God entertained by both Gilbert Kent and his son; but she would never be drawn into an argument on the subject. Nor, indeed, would Gilbert.

For the rest, the boy was taught geography, mathematics, and natural history, by his father, who was passionately fond of all three studies.

The two former he taught by objects and newspapers. He would let John add blocks, shingle nails, shavings, anything except figures. For geography, he would pick up a morning Herald, and read:—

“Special dispatch from London. It is reported that Livingstone is now near the head-waters of the Congo.”

“Ah, John,” he would say, going to the closet which held his books, “let’s see if we can’t find Livingstone. First, we’ll call at London, and see what they can tell us about him at the great newspaper offices.”

The voyage across from Boston to Liverpool was carefully marked on the map, with attention to the larger bays, capes, and so on, on the way.

“Now we’ll take a train to London, going through”—such and such large cities.

“Now rail to Dover, a funny, wheezy little steamer to Calais, rail to Paris, and — do you see? — down to Marseilles.”

In this way the journey was carried on until Livingstone was successfully discovered; and the whole lesson ended with an interview between that noted individual and the explorer, John usually personating Livingstone, and his father the stranger.

Then would come a talk about the animals and plants of Africa, interrupted occasionally by peals of laughter from the boy, who, nevertheless, became far better informed than the average schoolboy of his age concerning the Dark Continent.

Nor were his physical condition and education neglected. Gilbert took care that his son should grow to be strong of lung and limb; and many were the long walks they took together, out over the Cambridge bridges, or even to Roxbury and Dorchester — generally returning, hungry and happy, in a horse car.

John was acquainted with every fellow of his age on the street where he lived. There were some pretty rough ones among the number; but such was the boy's constant sense of his father's

presence that he would not speak nor listen to a word that would defile. His companions soon found that it was "no use to tell little Kent a good story"; by which, queerly enough, they meant a bad one.

CHAPTER II.

THE HOLE IN THE WALL.

AT eleven years, John Kent looked very much like other healthy, happy children of his age. His nearness to his father and friendship with Lady Courtley did not make him pale and thin or unnatural-seeming in any way. He had large, honest gray eyes, rather light brown hair, and was of sturdy build. It was a fleet-footed boy who could overtake him in a race, and once he had grappled with a big setter who was worrying a smaller dog. When the master of the setter came up, John was braced up rigidly, holding the larger animal tightly by the throat, in spite of his struggles. The little dog was nowhere to be seen. John let go his hold, and panted, quite breathless, while the man, who was a low-browed fellow, walked off scowling. John saw him turn savagely on the setter and kick him as they passed down the street.

“I saw where the dog got his manners,” said

John, in telling the story to his father that afternoon, among the chips and shavings. "So I did n't blame him so much. I wish the little black-and-tan had thanked me though," he added.

Mr. Kent smiled over his plane as if he were reminded of some story; but he only reached up and gave the boy a grave stroke on his moist, wavy hair.

It was at about this time that a great event occurred in John's life. He came home one evening from a long trip to Roxbury, where he had been sent to deliver a set of small shelves, which the people in the house were to put up themselves.

"O father," said he, as they walked downstairs to supper together, the man's arm around the boy — they always came down that way — "how jolly it would be if we lived in a little house of our own! Could n't you make one somewhere?"

"What put that into your head, my son?"

"I don't know, sir. Perhaps it was the house where I left the shelves. There were only three or four people living in it, I am sure; and there was a little girl about my age kneeling in a chair at the front window, 'looking for papa,' she said."

"Well, can't you look for me here?"

They had entered the close, ill-ventilated supper room, and were now seated side by side. Everybody else had eaten supper, so they had the room and untidy table to themselves.

"Oh, but it's different here. There's so many people — and — and it isn't *very* clean, is it, father?"

"You know we are poor, Johnnie. I wish I had a better home for you."

"Does it cost more to live in your own house, father?"

"Not when you are once in; but how are you going to get the house?"

"Why, build it, of course!"

Mr. Kent shook his head.

"The land costs too much," he said quietly. "But I'll think over what you have said, my boy. Perhaps something will come out of it."

John was satisfied that when his father began to "think over" a thing, it was as good as done. So he went to bed happy.

He had not outgrown his old habit. The longing that is hidden somewhere in every one of God's children, the longing for home, had sprung up in his heart. To him, home meant simply father. And a house where he could only speak

to him now and then, or press his hand slyly under the table ; where other people jostled rudely against one another and him, as they went in and out ; where they even shared their room at night with a third inmate, a weak and inoffensive enough young man, who was employed in a canning establishment in East Boston, but who stood between John and communion with his father like the angel with the flaming sword in the gate of Paradise, — this was but a mockery of home.

He was too shy to tell his father all this ; perhaps he could hardly have put it into words ; and so he had never voiced his growing longings until the sight of the sweet family life that afternoon had urged him to speak.

What dreams he had that night ! Visions of his father walking with him hand in hand, or sitting by their own fireside reading and talking of an evening. He woke up when the weak young man came in late from an evening at the "Howard," but immediately went to sleep again and began dreaming where he had left off.

The next day he laid the whole matter before Lady Courtley. She gave a little sigh as he prattled eagerly of his new plans, and took her glasses from her kind old eyes to wipe from

them a sudden moisture that had gathered there. Where was her home? God had kept her out of it all her life; perhaps as fathers and mothers keep their children from the bright parlor decked for Christmas Eve, to give them all the more glad surprise when they shall at last enter.

"You'll let me come and see you sometimes, won't you, John?"

"I guess I will! You must come every week—or every day," he added hastily, afraid he had not been cordial enough.

Lady Courtley laughed in her merry way.

"Once a week would do, I think, my bairn. But where is your house to be?"

"Oh, father's thinking it over, ma'am. We don't know yet where it will be. Perhaps—we won't go, just yet. But I guess we will."

His face, which had drooped a little at the thought, brightened again. The lady patted the brown head.

"Don't forget your auld friends, John, in the midst of the new. I doubt ye'll find many where you're going."

Lessons occupied the forenoon. At four o'clock came the grand treat of the day—the trip to his father's shop, from which, an hour or two later,

the two would emerge and walk back to the boarding-house together. During the intervening time John would sit on his odd perch and watch plane and saw and bit as they glittered through the yellow wood, driven by a skillful and steady hand.

It is time I told you about that perch. When Gilbert first entered the shop, on his arrival from Maine, and after the completion of his arrangements with Mr. Wilson (who was a distant connection), he had at once noticed, in the corner farthest from the street, a sort of open cupboard in the wall, close to the ceiling.

“What in the world is that for, ’way up out of reach?” he had asked.

“Oh, that was made by the former owner,” Mr. Wilson said. “He had intended to run his lathe by machinery, and the hole was to carry a belt from a machine shop next door.”

Before he had completed his arrangements the machinist had failed, and an old junk dealer had taken his place. The passageway had been blocked up at the further end, but as the two buildings, being out of the great currents of city business, were of wood and about five feet apart, there remained the cupboard-shaped nest,

which Wilson had never taken the trouble to close. From time to time he had thrown odd bits of wood up there, but he confessed he never expected to climb up after them.

Gilbert had thought no more of it at the time; but when, a few days later, John had accompanied him to the shop and, in spite of every effort to the contrary, would keep getting in the way, his eye fell for the second time upon the useless cupboard.

"John," said he, "when you come next time I'll have a nest ready for you, where you can stay and look down on us, without getting under foot."

John took the hint and left.

Two days later, by special invitation, the boy once more appeared at the shop.

"Now, sir," said his father, pointing to the dark corner, "up with you."

John (then only six years old) rebelled in his secret heart, and his flesh actually crept with fear at the thought of rats and other terrible creatures which might be lurking in that gloomy little cave.

But he never thought of refusing or drawing back for even a moment.

Without hesitation he marched over to the

corner, and looked about for some means to get up.

Presently he spied a block of wood nailed firmly to the wall; it looked as if it might hold. He tried it, catching another with his hand. Then he saw another and another. Up he went, his heart sinking as fast as his body rose. The whole distance was perhaps seven feet from the floor; it seemed as high as a church spire.

When he reached the last block, he found a semi-circular shelf, like a little platform before the door of a bird house. It was stoutly propped below by iron braces. Upon this he threw himself, panting, face down.

Then, oh, lovely sight! As he peered over the edge, there was his father looking up at him proudly and delightedly, his brown beard almost touching him, his hands already reaching up to grasp his own. He saw at once that his father had been there all the time, to catch him if he fell. It did not occur to him for years, I think, that the same father had nailed the blocks to the wall beforehand for him to mount by.

Having gained a vast reinforcement of courage from the bearded face, and smiled down into it, and given the two knotted hands a stroke, John

turned to the wooden cave behind him. He wanted very much to go in feet first, but concluded that that would not be brave, so he went the other way. Presently his head came bump against the drum-head of boards which were the inside limit of his den.

Once accustomed to the darkness, he found there was a perfect nest of pine and cedar shavings beneath him, together with something soft, which proved, to his delight, to be a ragged old coat of his father's.

He backed out of his woodpecker's hole in high glee; laughed, this time to his father, and then dove in again. The cupboard was about two feet in width, and this time he tried and succeeded in wriggling round, while he was in the dark, and emerging head foremost.

Gilbert had already returned to his work.

"Don't fall, son!" he called out, above the noise of the tools. "Be very careful and you will be safe. Are you warm?" It was early spring.

"Yes, father."

"Are you afraid?"

"No, father."

He nestled a while among his shavings, playing he was a gray mouse in the wainscoting; then he thought he would try the descent alone.

Gilbert's back was towards him; Mr. Wilson had stepped out to talk with a teamster; no one was looking.

He turned round, and let himself down over the edge of his shelf, feeling for the first step with his foot. This he reached safely; but the next moment his smooth-soled little boot slipped, and he fell, with a cry of terror.

A fraction of an instant of such agony of fright as he had never known, and he found himself—in his father's arms. Gilbert had turned and run across the shop just in time to catch and save him.

I have heard John say, years afterward, that he never reads the eleventh and the twelfth verses of the Ninety-first Psalm, without a vivid recollection of the bliss of that moment when he felt those firm, gentle arms underneath.

He did not visit his nest again that afternoon, but the next day he came and went up and down several times safely; and thereafter it was his delight to lie at full length on the shavings, with his elbows on his shelf and his cheeks on his hands, looking down into the shop, and sometimes joining in the conversation, sometimes remaining silent for an hour at a time. When any visitor

came into the shop the boy generally drew back out of sight, only to emerge when the door, with its tinkling bell, had announced the stranger's departure.

I have gone a long way back in my story to tell you about John's mouse-nest in the wall. On the afternoon after his talk about moving with Lady Courtley, he hurried down to the shop, and clambered up to his shelf as usual.

The two men were talking, as he came in, on the very subject with which his mind was filled.

"You can have it as well as not, if you want it," Mr. Wilson was saying.

They were so used to having John's two eyes and ears intent upon them as they talked, that they went on as if he were not there.

John threw down a block of wood with a clatter on the floor, so as to make sure they knew he was in the shop ; then listened eagerly.

"How far is it from here?"

"About ten minutes' walk. The only trouble is, it's so full of cobwebs and dust" —

"Never mind that," said Kent, smiling. "Have you spoken to your wife about it?"

"Yes. She's willing, and she'll be glad to take you and John. You won't mind our all eating together?"

“No, indeed!” rejoined the other warmly.

“Are you sure that the owners of the property would consent to moving their goods out of the rooms?”

“Consent? They’re goin’ to do it, anyway. Now look here, Gilbert Kent: here’s just the way the case stands. That end of the old house is just goin’ to ruin because there’s nobody livin’ in it; an empty house allers wears out faster’n one that’s occupied, don’t it?”

Kent nodded. Two gray eyes, from the hole in the wall, looked eagerly from one face to the other.

“Very well. Now the rooms are about half-filled, at the present time, with old second-hand furniture and stuff belonging to two owners. It’s a part of the ‘estate,’ and I pay my rent for one-half of the house to the agent, Stevenson. He says to me, the last time he was there, ‘Wilson,’ says he, ‘I wish there was another tenant in that old rat trap down by the wharves.’ ‘So do I,’ says I, ‘though I make bold to say it ain’t no rat trap, in which case my wife and I would be considered rats; but a good comfortable house, if ’t was built a hundred years ago.’ ‘Well,’ says Stevenson, ‘I’m goin’ to take out that old furniture and sell it; and if you can find a nice, orderly tenant—a

very particular old bachelor preferred — that will keep the ark in decent repair, you may have all the rent you can get out of him.' ”

“Which won't be much, I'm afraid,” said Gilbert, with a smile.

“All I want is for you to do any carpentering that's needed around the house, and for Johnnie, there, to do an errand when he's needed. You can pay half the board you've been paying, and that will more than feed you both. My wife and Doll will do what little sweepin' and cleanin' needs to be done.”

“How near the harbor is the house?”

“Not more'n five hundred feet. It's on good, high ground though; an' there's a tree close t' the front door. Martha and Doll will be awful glad to have company. They get pretty lonesome sometimes, I'll allow.”

“John,” said Gilbert, wheeling round suddenly, and gazing into the shadows out of which shone his boy's big gray eyes, “do you want to go? Mr. Wilson invites us to occupy three rooms in a little old-fashioned house in which he lives, down by the wharves. You've heard what he says about it. Do you want to go?”

The two eyes sent down a flash.

“Yes, father!”

“Then, Mr. Wilson, we’ll come any time when you are ready. Of course we must give a week’s notice at Mrs. Roberts’.”

“The sooner the better for me,” replied the other heartily. “I’ll tell Mr. Stevenson before I sleep to-night, and have the goods cleared out. Perhaps he’ll leave one or two pieces of furniture. It’s all old, you know.”

“Where did it come from?”

“It’s the remnants from the half-dozen old dwelling houses that used to belong to the estate. They’ve been all pulled down or made over but this one, and so the furniture kept collectin’ and collectin’. It would n’t bring much more’n the expense of cartin’, at auction, so they’ve just let it stay there, knee-deep in dust.”

“How old is the house, do you think?” inquired Gilbert, removing his carpenter’s apron, and dusting off bits of chip and sawdust from his threadbare clothes.

“Oh, I don’t know. Built before the Revolution, I reckon. There’s two or three queer stories about the place, that you’ll like to hear some time. They do say it’s haunted.”

Here he stopped, in obedience to a gesture from

the other's hand. But John had caught the word, and was treasuring it up with awe. A haunted house! He was more than ever anxious to move into it.

For I think you've discovered by this time that the three chief characteristics of the boy were honesty, trust in his father, and personal courage of the sort that sees danger and dreads it, but meets it with all his might. True bravery, strange to say, is the very sister, or perhaps I should say elder brother, of fear; they live in the same house, and never are far apart. The only shamefulness is when one sees the big brother idling about the house, or shambling along behind his pale little sister, instead of putting his arm about her, shielding her, and bearing her infirmities in such lovely ways that she grows like him.

That night Mr. Kent notified Mrs. Roberts, his landlady, that on the following Monday week he should pack up his slender effects, and say good-by to her. She was sincerely sorry, for he was a good, quiet boarder, who never complained of the quality of his food or the scantiness of his accommodations. She at once asked a private interview, and offered to let Johnnie's bill count for nothing, if the two would remain with her.

But Gilbert was firm. He insisted on going, though he managed to let her realize his determination without wounding her feelings. When the interview was over, the woman was in tears. She refused to receive pay for his final week's board and told him he must accept as her parting gift all that John and he could eat during those seven days, together with some sixty hours' free sleep.

CHAPTER III.

DOROTHY.

MOTHER, the chickens are wild to-night. Do you think there's going to be a storm?"

"I think it's likely, child. How's the wind?"

"It's the wave wind."

"And the sky?"

"All muffled up with clouds. And, oh, how the chickens fly!"

"Then the storm is coming. I hope your father will get home early. What time is it, Dorrie?"

"Half-past four, mother. Sha'n't I put the tea on to steep?"

"Not quite yet. Wait fifteen minutes. But you can be cutting the toast, if you like. I've bought a little cream from the new shop, and your father shall have some of that soft toast that he likes."

"O mother, how nice! Where is the loaf?"

“On the lower shelf of the pantry. Cut the slices thin, girlye.”

There was no need to admonish the child. She had often prepared slices for the toaster, and every time she bent her whole mind to the task.

Scrambling down from the big window seat where she had been nestling, she went across the floor with a motion that would have been ludicrous, but for the pitiful cause.

Some three years before, there had been a brief account in the morning papers of an accident in Fort Hill Square. A child had run against a large dray, moving along the street, and the forward wheel had — But why go into the painful details? The child's name was Dorothy Wilson, and here she was, on this March afternoon, in her home down by the wharves, hopping on her only foot across the floor of the small kitchen, toward the pantry. She might have used her little crutch, which was standing in the corner, but she preferred to flutter about without it, with her small hands waving up and down like wings, as long as she was happy. Her mother always knew when she was in low spirits, because then she put her crutch under her arm,

and moved slowly to and fro on her errands, leaning heavily upon it.

Hop, hop, hop, beating the air like a chicken that is not yet quite sure whether it is meant to fly or walk — three hops took her to the pantry door.

Then came the cutting. First the brown, crusty piece had to be pared off and carefully laid aside. Then, with a crisp but mellow *c-r-r-unch!* the knife passed slowly down through the loaf, the little maid holding her breath at each fresh cut, and giving a long sigh of content as the thin, fragrant slice fell over upon its predecessors.

"There, there, child!" called out Mrs. Wilson, from the outer room. "Don't cut up the whole loaf."

"How many slices, mother?"

Dorothy eyed the loaf regretfully.

"Not more'n a dozen. The cream won't hold out."

Dorothy counted. Eleven. The last slice was cut with more than usual care, the loaf put away, and covered up with a bowl, and the slices brought out.

"Now, may I put tea on?"

"If you want to, Dorrie. Here, let me get the caddy for you."

The woman reached up to a high shelf and took down the little caddy of japanned tin.

"There, shake out what you want, and I'll put it back."

Dorrie took off the top of the caddy, regaled herself with a rapturous sniff of its contents, and poured out upon the pine shelf, which was scrubbed as clean as soap and sand could make it, a small heap of the bits of leaf and stalk that possessed such magical power of revival under the cheery influences of hot water and Mrs. Wilson's chubby little Wedgwood teapot.

The caddy was put back on the shelf, the tea-leaves placed in the Wedgwood, and Mrs. Wilson poured in the water, which fell with a rich, bubbly sound into it, throwing up clouds of herby-smelling steam, the escape of which was soon checked by the cover. Having set the teapot upon the back part of the stove to steep, Dorothy peeped in to see that the coals were reaching a proper state for toasting, surveyed the bread, the cream, and the tea with great satisfaction, and hopped back to the window seat for one more look at her "chickens," as she

called the seagulls that were floating about in the strong breeze, back and forth, aslant, above the harbor.

If we could look down upon the smoky, noisy, grimy north end of the city from the gull point of view, we should see that the house where the Wilsons live, and which Gilbert Kent and his son mean to make their home, is an odd relic of a past age, as completely out of date, among the busy warehouses and manufactories about it, as our great-great-great-grandmother would be, dressed in the style of her day, and oh, so old, so very old, in the midst of a gay crowd of ladies and young girls shopping on Temple Place.

When the house was built, in the early days of Boston, it had plenty of company. Other buildings of similar architecture were grouped about it, and people in silks and velvets trod its threshold. There was a tradition once rife in the neighborhood that Lafayette had paused before this identical structure; nay, before the very window seat where the little crippled lass is now sitting; and spying a pretty face behind the panes courteously doffed his hat, whereat the owner of the bright face started back from her chair, flushing indignantly, and pulled the shutter to with a clang.

For she was the daughter of a Tory and would have nothing to do with the gallant Frenchman, whose sympathies were with the Boston rebels.

Be that as it may, the house was certainly standing at the time of the Revolution, and was by no means new even then. It was not a large affair, measured up and down, for it was only a story and a half high with a quaint gambrel roof, and a huge chimney occupying a space as large as a good-sized room.

But, although it was not lofty, the old house covered considerable space, for in the course of several generations of occupants, additions had been built to the original structure, and these, rambling about at obtuse angles with one another in the vaguest possible way, would have afforded ample room for two families, if not more. One end of the house, comprising what was the most recent addition, was occupied, as we have seen, by the carpenter and his wife and child. The oldest portion of all, to which the Kents were invited, was surmounted by a sort of rickety cupola, visited only by pigeons and an occasional swallow.

The site for the house had been well chosen, for it was on high ground, and the land fell off so rapidly toward the north and east that from the upper

windows a glimpse could actually be obtained of the heaving sea itself, tossing restlessly to and fro in the harbor.

Even from Dorrie's favorite window seat in the kitchen the topmasts of vessels, with their tarry ropes, and an occasional grimy sail, were in full view, and filled the lame child's brain with endless dreams of foreign lands. To her, in her lonely life, everything that moved, whether it had breath or not, was possessed of an individuality of its own; and her names for common enough things were as simple and graphic as the vocabulary of an Indian.

The gulls were her chickens in the great sky-farmyard; clouds "muffled" the sky when God wanted to keep it warm and dry from the storm. The east wind, sweeping in with the salt scents of the Atlantic, was the "wave-wind;" and others were in the same way re-christened by Dorothy.

Her lookout at the window did not last long this time, for it was now growing dusk, and a splashy exclamation point or two on the pane told of the gathering storm, which would probably bring her father home at an earlier hour than usual.

She poised herself on one foot, and hopping to

the fire laid the slices of bread on a gridiron, removed a stove-cover, and proceeded to toast them with eager concentration on her task. For Dorrie's toast was famous and had to be of exactly the right shade of brown and degree of crispness.

Mrs. Wilson, in the meantime, was stirring up cream and butter in a small saucepan, and now the slices of toast were dipped and arranged in a blue-and-white dish of unknown age.

Just as these preparations were finished, a white tablecloth thrown over the table, and the plates laid, the outer door opened and closed. A moment later a peculiar, soft whistle was heard.

Dorrie dropped her knives and forks, and went fluttering across the room to meet her father, who was shaking a few sprinkle-drops of rain from his overcoat.

"Welcome home, papa!" she cried, putting up her face to be kissed; and in he came, bearing his little lame bird in his arms, as he had done ever since she was hurt.

"Oh, this *is* good!" he exclaimed as he entered the kitchen and sniffed at the grateful smell of toast and steaming tea. "A long day, eh, Martha? But I've got good news for you."

His other arm was around his wife by this time,

and the three would have made a pretty group, standing there in the red firelight that streamed out from between the bars of the stove, if there had been any one looking in at the window to see.

"What is it, Thomas? I can't stop a minute, for the toast 'll all dry up."

"Why, Gilbert Kent and his boy have agreed to come here and live in the further end of the house, just as we planned."

"Oh, good, good! I'll show him my chickens, and we'll have a garden, and oh—he must be a nice boy, father?"

"A capital boy; I wonder I have n't brought him down to see you some time. An' he's jest off the hooks to come, I can tell you."

Mrs. Wilson looked nearly as much pleased as her daughter. She at once set about preparing the table for supper.

"I have n't had any light yet," she apologized, "because Dorrie does like the stove-light so. There," as she placed the lamp on the table, "now it really does look cheerful! You sit right down, Thomas, and I'll pour out the tea the first thing. How it does rain, to be sure!"

The storm had come, and the drops were dashing and drumming against the panes in a way that made the little room seem all the cosier.

“Do you believe we can make the place comfortable for him?” asked Martha, as they sat around the table. “You’ve always said he was such a scholar. And the boy—I’m afraid he’ll get lonesome, away down in this quiet corner.”

“Oh, we can fix things up well enough. Give Kent a place for his books, and a good shelter for his boy, and he’ll ask no more. As for John, Doll, here, will be company enough for him.”

The girl’s eyes sparkled. She could not eat, she was so excited at the prospect of having a companion. Once or twice a doubt flashed across her, a fear lest the strange boy might not sympathize with her likes and dislikes, might even be rude and disagreeable to her; and then came again the necessary conviction that he “*must* be nice.” God could n’t have been saving up this new delight for her all this time, this answer to her repeated though silent prayers (not mentioned even to her mother, lest they should make her unhappy), to give her at last a disappointment. So she yielded herself to the bliss of anticipation.

The Wilsons in their youth had lived in a town adjoining that of the Kents. They had come to Boston soon after their marriage, and having heard of this dilapidated tenement, had obtained per-

mission to rent it and occupy it for an exceedingly small sum.

Thomas had failed to inform his new tenant — mainly because he understood so little about it himself — that the estate was now the subject of a lawsuit between certain claimants and heirs, and that it bade fair to remain so for a good while to come. In the course of time other buildings had so sprung up around it that it was entirely removed from business streets, with the nearest of which it was connected only by a long and circuitous alley, which led finally straight under a huge storage warehouse, and so out to the world beyond.

Mr. Stevenson, the agent in charge of the neglected spot, was perfectly willing to have it forgotten and “unimproved,” so long as his salary continued, and the rent from Wilson was regularly forthcoming. He made no objection to the new tenants, but gave all parties distinctly to understand that they were “tenants at sufferance” only, and were liable to have to leave any day on short notice.

This had at first disturbed the Wilsons, but as day followed day, and weeks glided into months, they gradually lost sight of the instability of

their perch, and grew to regard it as a permanent home.

Dorothy had just begun to go to school when the accident happened. Since then the sensitive child could not bear the glances of her school-mates, and the pitying allusions or constrained silence caused by her misfortune. So her mother taught her as best she could at home. She had heard that John Kent was acquiring an education in the same way. Perhaps they could study together. To be sure she was a year younger; but then he would be like a big brother to her.

The rain beat in torrents upon the shingled roof over Dorothy's head that night, but her dreams were sunshiny with hope.

CHAPTER IV.

AT HOME.

ON the morning appointed for moving John paid everybody and every place in the dingy and ill-ordered boarding house a last visit.

Mrs. Courtley held him in her arms for a moment, her silvery hair mingling with his wavy brown locks. Then she kissed him on the forehead, and, rising, went to a tiny cupboard in the wall. Unlocking this with a curiously-shaped key, she took down, after a slight hesitation, a quaint china cup of antique pattern and gave it to him.

"It is all I have," she said. "I wish I could afford to buy you a nice present—not to remember me by, for you will do that anyway"—

"Indeed I will, ma'am!"

"But just because I love you, my dear. And whenever you look at the little cup, I want you to think, 'If I am ever in any trouble of mind or heart, I must go to her.'"

"Like the fairy godmother," said John, trying

hard not to cry at the thought of leaving his good friend behind. "Dear Lady Courtley, thank you very much for the cup. I shall be sure to remember, and I'll come often to see you, if father'll let me. Good-by."

"Good-by, my boy. God bless you."

The hardest parting was now over. Mrs. Roberts cried a good deal, into a doubtful-looking apron, and the weak young man, whose name was Pettingill, caressed him with a cold and bony hand. The latter, moreover, offered his assistance in moving, which was gladly accepted.

Two shabby trunks and a box of books comprised their entire stock of worldly goods, and these were wheeled down on a barrow to the new home, in successive trips, causing the young man, whose legs were not strong, to tremble a good deal.

"When it comes to handlin' cans," he confided shakily to John as he wiped his clammy brow, "I'm *some*! But I ain't no pedestrium, I ain't."

Last of all, the boy took his father's hand, and, guided by Mr. Wilson, who gave himself a half-holiday, walked, for the first time in many years, home.

He had to take careful note of the route, there were so many twists and turns between the shop and the house.

Pretty soon there began to be a tarry odor in the air. Pennants appeared now and then, floating from slender mastheads, over beyond cordage and junk shops. Occasionally they caught sight of a green inlet of water, with lazy ripples, rising and falling against piles black with age.

As they were nearing the end of their journey John thought he heard a pattering of little feet behind him, on the sidewalk. He turned, and lo! there was the identical terrier he had rescued months before, trotting along in their wake. As John turned, the dog stopped and looked up at the boy with an appealing look, his wiry tail giving one or two irresolute wags, as if uncertain what emotion had better be expressed under the trying circumstances.

"Look, father!" said John. "There's that little dog following us. Do you suppose he remembers me? Ought n't we to send him home?"

The tail stopped wagging, and slowly uncurled. The dog never took his eyes from John's face.

"Well," said Mr. Kent, "I don't know as it will do any harm to let him come along, if Mr.

Wilson don't care. You can take him back to the old street to-morrow."

Mr. Wilson did not care, but said he really hoped the dog would stay. His little girl had kept asking for one ever since she got back from the hospital.

"You know," he added, his voice growing a trifle husky, "the way she got hurt was dartin' out into the street to pick up a lame dog she thought was goin' to git run over."

All this time their fourfooted follower eagerly watched the speakers, and, as they moved on, tripped hopefully after them, his tail resuming its normal curl, and a new light of hope in his liquid brown eyes. When John was not looking, he even took two or three little fancy steps, a sort of hop, skip, and jump of delight, sobering down instantly, however, and trotting meekly along again as he saw Gilbert glance toward him.

Another turn, from a large street into a small one, then diagonally into one still narrower, pretty sharply uphill, and they arrived at the entrance of the alley.

"Don't hit your heads," cautioned Mr. Wilson, setting the example by stooping as he entered.

It was very dark for a few steps, and the dog's hair bristled as vague visions of rats floated across his misty, half-spiritual, half-brutal consciousness.

"'T will be lighter in a minute," called the guide again from the van. "Now we're all right."

John looked about him with great curiosity. The path still inclined upward. On the right, a neglected, vacant lot, with what were perhaps the remains of an ancient cellar, now half-full of dingy, freeze-and-thaw ice, blackened shrubs, and a miscellaneous collection of old cans, bottles, and boots, lay between him and the shuttered back-windows of the warehouses he had just passed.

On the left, nothing but tall, dingy buildings of brick and granite, the windows a dull brown from inner and outer dust. Not a dwelling house to be seen, until, from a few steps farther on, their own came into view.

John Kent will never forget that first sight of his new home — so old, so very old, yet so new to him.

The ground on this side of the house was a little higher than its threshold, so that it seemed nestling in the earth and peeping out at him from

behind a low wicket fence that ran completely round it. It was sheltered by the one remaining tree in that quarter of the city, a gnarled and rugged elm, which had grown stunted and discouraged during its young life, but now, in its ripe old age, was reaping the benefit of the decay and removal of its former hindrances, and gratefully lifting its boughs to the sun for which it had waited so long. It was just tall enough to overtop the house, against the garret windows of which it brushed. The boughs were bare and blackened, but John could see the tiny, knobby buds all over them, ready for the touch of spring.

Beyond the house were the city roofs and red walls again, with a film of smoke hanging lazily above them. And beyond them, the grove of slender topmasts, in which Dorothy's imagination was wont so often to wander.

Overhead floated, far apart, strange birds with narrow, graceful wings and white breasts ; above all, the sleepy, motionless clouds of a March afternoon.

All these surroundings John took in at hardly more than a glance. For standing in the gateway, in front of the house, was a vision that

caused him to catch his breath with wonder and delight.

Only a girl, who might be about his own age, in a simple woolen dress, and a faded scarf thrown about her head and shoulders. But it was her face that arrested him. Such a clear, transparent complexion, framed by a fluff of silky hair that escaped from under the homely scarf and shone like threads of spun gold, in the afternoon sun; and such wide-open blue eyes looking straight into his with almost painful intentness! She stood poised on one foot, supporting herself lightly with a tiny hand against each post of the narrow gate, and leaned forward breathlessly. So slight, so fair, so exquisitely pure and dainty she looked, that John was almost afraid she would fly away with those strange birds, before his very eyes.

As he came up she did not speak, but looked up into his face with the terrier's appeal in her two blue eyes, and something of a woman's searching glance, that reads so terribly; then, with a sigh of relief, held out one hand, and turned up her face to be kissed.

John touched her lips reverently with his. He hardly knew how to address this fragile little creature.

“Sha’n’t we come in?” he said, clumsily forgetting what he had heard of her lameness.

“You go first,” the sensitive child replied, flushing to the roots of her hair; “I always wait for papa.”

So the four, with master terrier at their heels, entered the kitchen together.

There was no mistaking the warmth of Mrs. Wilson’s welcome.

“I’ve only been afraid you’d change your mind and would n’t come,” she said. “You’ve no idea how glad we are to see you, Mr. Kent! And John, too; what a strong-looking boy for his age! Just come right into the living room,” she continued, — for Martha Wilson had not forgotten the old New England term, — “and make yourselves at home.”

“I suppose we must unpack and take possession of our new quarters pretty soon,” remarked Gilbert with a smile. “Have the boxes arrived safely?”

“All come, three of them, in good order. I had the man put ’em down right by the front door. Dorrie, where are you taking John?”

“Just to see my chickens,” said the child shyly. “Won’t you come?” she added, looking

up into his face with a trustfulness that won him completely.

"I'd like to see them very much. Are you going to feed them?"

Dorrie gave a merry laugh that made her companion feel more comfortably sure she was a human girl.

"They've been fed already," she said with a queer look. "There," leading him to her favorite window seat, "do you see them?"

"Oh, those," he said, rather mystified. "Are they yours? Do they know you?"

But another laugh was her only reply. How delightful it was to have somebody to show these things to! She was quite surprised to find that her treasures had never seemed so wholly her own as when she had divided the possession with John.

Most of the remaining hours of the afternoon were spent in cleaning out the "Kent end" of the house, and preparing it for the occupancy of the new-comers. Among the old furniture had been found a couple of beds, a table, and three or four chairs, all more or less out of repair, which Mr. Wilson had purchased for a small sum on Gilbert's account. To mend them would be

merely amusement during leisure moments ; and John actually preferred the broken furniture on that account.

“ Father always likes to mend things,” he confided to Dorrie, as they viewed with great satisfaction an armchair with only three legs.

“ I wonder,” said Dorrie slowly, “ if God will ever mend me ! ”

Then she suddenly threw herself on the floor in a passion of weeping, her little shoulders rising and falling convulsively with her sobs. It was the first time in many months that she had openly rebelled against her misfortune. Something in the ludicrous attitudes of the maimed furniture tilting helplessly this way and that reminded her sharply of what she often entirely forgot in her solitary life. And now here was John. Did she look to him like that ? How could she ever play with him ?

John stood a moment, speechless with sympathy. Then he stooped over the little dusty figure and, raising her from the floor, put his arms tightly round her.

“ You really don’t need mending, you know, Dorrie,” he whispered. “ If you were nothing but a chair, you would.”

Dorothy's tears ceased to flow, though her bosom heaved. It was an entirely new view of the subject.

"Besides," continued John, "you've got three feet anyway."

The blue eyes shot out a glance of surprise from under the wisps of tossed hair that were hung with bright drops like a rosebush after an April shower.

"Why, don't you see? God has n't mended your leg, you know, but he sent me to you. I'm your friend, and of course if I'm yours, everything I've got is yours, and here are my two feet. He gave them to you, I guess, and you can always call them yours. They'll go anywhere you want them to, as long as I live."

Most girls would have laughed and said, "How funny!"

Dorothy neither laughed nor cried. She looked him full in the face a minute, then released herself gently, and saying, "I'm sorry I was naughty," turned and hopped slowly away to her seat in the kitchen window. Her mother noticed that she used her crutch all the rest of that day.

When she kneeled that night in a one-sided fashion to say her prayers at her mother's knee, this is what she said:—

“Dear Lord, I was very bad to cry because you did n’t mend me. Please forgive me, and keep me just the way you want me, only make me real good. And, O dear Lord, I thank you for sending me John Kent’s feet. Amen.”

CHAPTER V.

OLD FRIENDS.

TO the children, and perhaps to Gilbert Kent, the days that followed were cups filled to the brim with such joy as they had never before known.

There was much to do to make the old house really habitable. For half a century moth and rust, with their more active allies, rats, mice, and the weather, had done their best to level the gray walls, on which, as all over the roof, bright green moss and golden lichen grew plentifully.

It was fortunate that March was rather lamb-like than leonine that year, or father and son would have suffered from the wind that for weeks laughed at their efforts to keep him out, finding his way in through some unguarded postern as often as he was balked at larger entrances.

Gilbert found his time completely occupied through the working hours of the day in patching the roof, re-nailing clapboards, repairing furniture, and setting things to rights generally. He found

opportunities to do an odd job now and then for Mrs. Wilson, whose premises were often apt to need a few nails or a shingle for days before her husband could afford the time away from his shop necessary for the operation. Besides, Thomas Wilson was an easy-going man, who was in the habit of leaving things about as they were as long as possible.

One important assistant — or so he appeared to consider himself — was the terrier, who was now wholly domesticated in the family, and who went by the name of Terry, partly as an abbreviation of his generic appellation, partly in honor of a good-natured Irish boy whose acquaintance John had made a short time before his removal from Mrs. Roberts' boarding house.

Terry was constantly present during the repairs, lending the whole weight of his moral support to the undertaking. Not a nail was driven but Terry winked at every blow; not a hole in the floor was mended which Terry's moist nose had not seriously investigated. When Gilbert had occasion to mount the short ladder that the leakages in the roof rendered necessary, Terry stood patiently, with his fore paws upon the lowest round, evidently under the impression that he was steadying the ladder

for the workman. No trace of his original owner, it should be remarked, could be discovered by the most diligent inquiry. Indeed, Terry seemed to have "grewed," like Topsy, and to have found his first real home in the old house.

One morning Gilbert sent John and Dorrie away upon an errand to the other end of the city, giving them their horse car fares, and telling them they need not be back before the dinner-hour.

On their return, he met them at the gate, relieved Dorrie of her crutch (which of course she had to carry in the public streets and the cars, whatever her mood) and taking her in his arms, bade his son follow him. They entered the front door, and turning to the right instead of to the left, as usual, found themselves in a long, narrow room which had formerly served for a parlor; it was now abandoned entirely to dust and cobwebs, and formed a sort of march land between the Kents and the Wilsons.

"Why, Mr. Kent, what are you bringing me in here for?" cried Dorrie. "I could have walked just as well."

John smiled covertly. The idea of seriously suspecting his father of doing anything foolish or unnecessary simply amused him.

Instead of answering, Gilbert stepped to a small door with rudely carved panels, which neither of the children had ever opened.

On its being thrown back, a narrow, winding staircase was disclosed. They could see that the stairs had been recently swept and mended in two or three places.

Up they went, and presently reached what seemed necessarily the end of their journey — a flat broad ceiling, directly above their heads, cutting off any further progress. It was so dark that they could just distinguish this.

“Now watch, Dorrie!” cried John in high glee. “I know father never brought us to such a place as this unless there was some way to get up out of it.”

“But it’s all closed up.”

“You watch!”

It was Dorothy, the delicate and sensitive, after all, that needed her faith strengthened; while to John, the robust, out-of-door boy, it was as natural as the air he breathed. Still he knew his father so much better than Dorothy did, that perhaps she ought not be blamed.

Gilbert had been feeling in the darkness for a handle which projected from the wall of the stair-

case. As soon as he grasped it, something above them rattled slightly, then a crack of sky showed ; and as he pulled down, the trapdoor rose up, until it was broadly open, and the light of noon streamed down through the twigs of the elm.

For a moment the children were speechless with delight. Then as all three climbed the remaining stairs and emerged into the cupola, cries of delight burst from them. For behold, the broad ocean, stretching away to the east, where the harbor, dotted with islands, grew into a bay, and at last into the dim openness of the Atlantic !

“ O dear, dear Mr. Kent, how did you do it ? How did you find it out ? ”

Dorrie never took her eyes from the ocean, while she kept on uttering hardly coherent exclamations of delight.

“ Oh, that ’s where the chickens go at night ! And it was there all the time, only we were just too low down ! Oh, look, look, see that steamer ! ”

It was a Cunarder, slowly forcing her way up to her dock in East Boston.

“ And the ships ! John, why don’t you look ? See that splendid one with the white sails — oh, oh ! ”

Further words would not come. She sank down on a little seat, which, newly propped and boarded, ran around the open cupola, just inside the rail.

John, for his part, divided his glances about equally between his father's face, Dorrie, and the scene stretched out before him.

"Why do you look so much more at the city than at the sea, my son?" asked his father, laying his hand caressingly on the boy's shoulder.

"I was thinking, sir," said John in his slow way, "how many folks there were down there under all those roofs, and how I wish they could get up to a place like this, where they could breathe good air and see the ocean."

"But you don't seem to care much about the ocean yourself."

"Oh, I do, sir! Only I was thinking of the folks. I know the ocean is there, all the time. I shall think of it nights when I go to sleep, and I hope I shall dream about it. But the folks" —

"Well?"

"Why do you suppose God don't let them have high places like this, father, to see from?"

"Would n't they think all the time of the ocean and the sky, instead of trying to love their

neighbors? Remind me sometime, son, to tell you the story of St. Simeon Stylites."

Rather profound talk, you think, for a conversation between a father and a boy of eleven? It is a common mistake to be afraid of speaking in this way to children about their kingdom — which is of heaven. The only trouble is, that we do not let our conversation with them be profound enough for them to understand: for in that kingdom the greatest things are the simplest; and across our passport must be written, ere we can enter, "He is as a little child."

After showing John the mechanism of the trap-door, Mr. Kent gave him and Dorrie full permission to go there whenever they wanted to. He eventually built a little banister of rope down the staircase, as in the companion-way of a vessel, for Dorrie to hold on by, in going up or down. There was one point on which he warned them to be careful. The trap could not be opened from the upper side. They must therefore never close it below them.

On the evening after the renovation of the cupola, Lady Courtley and Waldo Pettingill took tea with the Wilsons and Kents, by special invitation.

After the departure of the latter from the boarding house, these two singularly unlike people had been drawn together by the mere fact of their common mourning for the two friends who had gone. By a sort of divine Rule of Three it often comes about that two people who are fond of a third become attached to each other; especially if that third be a wholly worthy person and temporarily out of sight.

So it was in this case. Mr. Pettingill, on the evening when the two vacant chairs were first observed at Mrs. Roberts' table, took his tea without milk—a mark of the deepest affliction with him, which was a constant trial to his landlady's conscience, lest she should be glad whenever trouble overtook him.

The strong tea, combined with his emotions, causing the young man to choke somewhat, he met Mrs. Courtley's eye, which she had unintentionally fixed upon him, whereat he fairly broke down and left the table; for "Lady" was known to be the particular friend and confidante of John. The sense of his loss came more vividly to the poor fellow as he met her sympathizing glance.

He had a ticket that evening to the Performing Seals and Wild Men of Borneo, but he felt that their performances would jar upon him.

He was sitting on the edge of his bed in his desolate room, staring gloomily at the bright spot in the carpet covered by Gilbert's old hair-trunk for the last five years, when a tap came at the door, and a message that Mrs. Courtley would like to see him a few moments in her room, if he pleased.

Mechanically twitching his necktie into place and buttoning his coat across his narrow chest, he did as he was bid, too miserable to be elated over what would otherwise have seemed a great honor, to receive such an invitation from "Lady."

What passed at that interview he never told, but he came out with a more hopeful tread and the air of a man who has found a friend.

By special permission he changed his seat, at the next meal, from the extreme end of the table to one beside Lady Courtley, and endeavored to show, by every mark of respect, — extending even to the gift of a dozen very bright cans from the establishment with which he was connected, "to plant flowers in," — his allegiance to her.

The wit of the table essayed some rude joke about

"Bandy Dan,
The lady's man;"

but it was not well received, and the would-be satirist subsided.

MRS. A. M. COURTLEY:—

Dear Madam,—I should be very much pleased, and so would Mr. Kent and John, to have you take tea with us next Thursday evening at six. John talks about you a great deal, and says, “Please come, dear lady.”

Yours very respectfully,

MARTHA WILSON.

MRS. MARTHA WILSON:—

Dear Madam,—It will give me great pleasure to take tea with you on Thursday. May I presume on your kindness to bring one more guest? You may have heard Mr. Kent speak of Mr. Waldo Pettingill, a former roommate of his at this house. I know it would give him sincere pleasure to be included in your invitation.

Very truly yours,

AUGUSTA M. COURTLEY.

Dear Mrs. Courtley,—Do ask Mr. Pettingill, by all means. We shall be very glad to see him.

Yours sincerely,

MARTHA WILSON.

That was the correspondence, and, as a result thereof, on the aforesaid Thursday evening a gentle-faced, silver-haired lady, accompanied by a young gentleman with light eyebrows and rather a disconcerted air (from having knocked his head several times against the brickwork of

the alley), opened the little gate we know so well, and walked up to the door.

John Kent sprang into the lady's arms, and then gave a warm grasp of the hand to Mr. Pettingill, who patted him violently on the head as if he were sealing him like a can.

"Step right up to my room, ma'am, and lay off your things," said hospitable Martha, while her other visitor, who, however awkward he might be in general society, was always at home with dogs — that was what first led John to trust in him — ingratiated himself with Terry.

Little Dorrie hopped to and fro in a state of great excitement, with a bright flush on her usually pale cheek.

Gilbert and Mr. Wilson now coming in from a repair job on the fence, the whole company sat down to tea; a ceremony to which Martha's cosy little Wedgwood had been summoning them for the last ten minutes.

"I must confess, Mr. Kent," said Lady Courtley, with one of her bright smiles, "that you have gained by the change."

"Ah," replied Gilbert, "we have, indeed. Such quiet, such peace of mind, I have hardly known since I arrived in Boston."

"It is such a dear, quaint little place here! Is there any school or church near by for the children?"

"There is a school," replied Mrs. Wilson, "but neither of them attend it, ma'am. I've been trying to give lessons to my Dorrie, and John says you've done the same by him. I hardly dare say how he misses you."

"I can guess," she replied, with an affectionate glance at the boy, "for I know how much I miss him."

"We go to meetin'," continued Martha, "in a little meetin'-house down by the wharves. There's a man preaches there in a sail loft to the sailors. We go partly because it's near and partly for the reason that Thomas has a fancy for hearing the gospel preached to seafaring men, the way it was in the first place."

The conversation soon wandered off to other topics, and before long a general pushing back of chairs announced that the meal was finished.

John and Dorrie at once took possession of Lady and took her to all their favorite nooks in the old house. Mr. Kent's rooms were cheaply furnished, but they had an air of their own from their very age. There were two or three prints

on the wall, including a woodcut from Harper's, framed by Gilbert's own hand. His books, well-worn, but in neatest possible condition, were on plain pine shelves on one side of the yawning fireplace on the lower floor, and away from its direct heat.

In addition to the vacant hall or parlor already described, there was still another wing or ell of the house which had not been inhabited. This stretched away toward the sea and commanded a partial view of the harbor, of course not equal to that from the cupola above.

It was in the garret in this wing that Mr. Kent had decided to sleep. John's room, opening from his father's, was merely the corner of the garret, divided from the other portions by a rude board partition. There were two windows, one in the end of the building and a smaller one, of dormer shape, in the gambrel roof. From this latter window, the cupola, and in fact nearly the whole of the house, could be seen.

John's bed was under the eaves, and he told his white-haired friend, as he pointed out where he slept, that he never lay down at night without a last look out toward the north and east, where he knew the sea was, though he could neither hear nor see it.

"And then," he continued eagerly, "I love to lie down and imagine I am creeping, creeping down between all those houses to the water, where a little boat is waiting for me under a high, black wharf, and in I jump and away goes the boat" —

"With you rowing?"

"No, ma'am; somehow it goes itself. And I can feel the backs of the waves lifting it, lifting it along. And we go out past the steamers and the lighthouses and away out on the ocean, where the stars float, and — and" —

"And then?"

"Why, then, ma'am, I'm generally asleep."

Mr. Pettingill listened with some amazement to this method of embarking on a dream-ocean, and shook his head doubtfully.

He got all the ocean he wanted, he said, "goin' over to East Boston an' back every day 'n the ferry. Did you ever go over in a ferry-boat?" he asked suddenly, turning to Dorrie, who was listening to all that was said.

"No, sir," said Dorrie shyly.

"Well, I'll tell you what, I'll take y' over, some fine day. It's a real cute sail, when you don't hev to do it more 'n twice a day."

"Thank you, sir," said Dorrie politely. In her secret heart she would have preferred to be a fellow-passenger with John, as he had described his voyage.

There was a small closet in this room where John kept his special treasures. There was a queer, oblong nut, with a mysterious something rattling inside; a shell with a pink lining and a wonderful store of ocean songs; the cup that Lady Courtley had given him, and one or two other keepsakes.

All these the owner exhibited with pride. His visitor never lost interest in what he was showing her, and it was more than half an hour before they returned to the large room below.

Lady Courtley now announced that she must take her leave. Before she went, she looked out of the window, and said to Dorrie:—

"I hope you have a garden here in the summer-time?"

"I should love to, but I've never had anything to plant but scarlet beans," said the little maid sorrowfully.

"Look here," broke in Waldo, so impetuously that he gave Martha quite a start, "I've got a cousin in the seed business—at least he's a

packer and shipper in a big grocery store where they sell 'em — and he can always get a few packages for nothing. I'll send 'em to ye, now see if I don't."

He had been really suffering from his sympathy for the child, and had stared fixedly at the spot where her poor little foot ought to have been, during nearly every moment of his visit. It was plainly a relief to him to express himself in flower seeds, having vainly endeavored to find some opening for cans.

Dorrie thanked him delightedly, and so did John, who knew his kind heart.

The two visitors said good-by, and passed out through the alley, in which Mr. Pettingill bumped himself even more times than during his first passage. Terry accompanied them to the street with courteous wags of his tail.

CHAPTER VI.

JUSTICE.

TWO weeks after Mr. Waldo Pettingill's call a package was delivered at the old house by the postman, whose visits were a rare treat.

““Miss Dorothy Wilson,”” read Martha. “Dorrie, here's something come for you. Do le's see what 't is.” And she handed her the long, plump package.

Dorrie's fingers trembled as she unfastened the little metallic clamp — for the envelope was unsealed — and opening the end, peered in.

“O mother, mother, it's seeds! It's my seeds that Mr. Pettingill promised to send!”

“Land, what a lot of them!” exclaimed Mrs. Wilson, looking over her shoulder. “Wherever will you plant them all?”

“Oh, we'll find a place, John and I. O mother, see the names — mignonette, sweet-peas, nasturtium, asters, balsams — oh, and a great many more!”

"Child, you'll have a great garden. Do you suppose you can take care of it?"

"John and I can together. Oh, here's a letter! It's from Mr. Pettingill."

She unfolded it and read aloud slowly, consulting her mother once or twice on the longer words.

Dear Miss Dorothy,—I send you herewith a parcel of seeds, hoping you will accept them and enjoy planting the same. Please give my respectful regards to Gilbert Kent, Esquire, and to John Kent. Also, to your father and mother; so no more from

Your obdt. serv't,

W. PETTINGILL.

P. S. If you would like some cans to plant in, I should be very glad to ship you a few.

P. S. How is Terry?

Dorrie broke into a merry laugh, in which she was joined by her comrade, who had come up just in time to hear the two postscripts.

"Where are you going to have your garden, Dorrie?"

"*Our* garden," she corrected. "Come along, Two-feet, and we'll pick out a place. Father said I could have it anywhere I wanted."

She had a new method of walking now, neither using her crutch nor hopping. She placed one

hand on John's bent arm, and, supporting herself thus, and on the other side by a neat cane which his father had made for her, managed much more easily than ever before. But whenever she was excited or in a hurry, she still fluttered and hopped, with hands waving.

"Now, Two-feet" (this was the new pet name she had given John), "what do you think of a little bed along this side of the house? We could see the tops of the masts and the chickens while we worked."

"It won't do, Dorrie," said John. "There won't be any sun here, except a little while in the morning. We must have our garden on the south side of the house."

He led her round to the front door.

"There; I should say the flowers would grow here, first-rate. The porch will keep off the wind and it will be warm and sunny here all summer."

It was settled accordingly that the garden should be in that spot. The earth was dug over by the boy, and laid out into beds with the assistance of Mr. Pettingill, who made several calls, after his work was finished for the day, to observe the progress of the enterprise.

It was at the close of a warm May afternoon,

when Dorrie was taking a nap like a kitten, curled up in her window seat, and the sun was pouring down out-of-doors with a fervor that was more suggestive of midsummer than of spring, that an incident occurred which, by first driving them apart, bound father and son closer.

John had spent a part of the forenoon at Lady Courtley's, going over some of his old studies with her, and accepting a polite invitation from Mrs. Roberts to stay to lunch.

From there he had gone to his father's shop, and had spent an hour in his mousehole. Gilbert had a perplexing piece of cabinet-work on hand, and could not pay much attention to him, so he concluded to go home and dig in the garden.

"John," said his father, looking up with knitted brow from an obstinate joint whose parts refused, for the fifth time, to meet, "I wish you would go up to Mr. Blakeman's and tell him I must have that new lot of glue. The last he sent me was good for nothing. You know I spoke about it yesterday."

Now John had already taken the freshest and sweetest hour of the day to do just that errand. His father had not told him when to go, but he knew the glue would be needed soon, and the boy thought he would surprise him by his promptness.

Partly from an answering flash to the reproof in his father's tone, which he knew he did not deserve, and partly because he still wanted to surprise him, — for Mr. Blakeman had promised to have the glue ready that very afternoon, twenty-four hours earlier than Gilbert expected it, — John did not answer a word, but quietly walked out of the shop and down the street.

Gilbert's brow darkened.

“‘Boys will be boys,’” remarked Wilson foolishly. “He'll soon get over his sulks.”

“If I thought” — But Gilbert Kent did not finish the sentence.

He worked in silence a few minutes, making sad business with his job. At last one of the most important pieces cracked in the middle with a vicious little snap, undoing the whole day's work.

Gilbert threw the remnants down angrily. The room was hot and his head ached. He had that mortifying sense of failure, which so wrings our jaded nerves when we realize that long care and drudgery have availed nothing and we must begin again at the very beginning.

“I can't work any more to-day,” he said. “I'm going home now, and start this job over again to-morrow morning. My head aches as if 't would split.”

He threw on his coat, and strode through the shop, out into the street, toward the old house. Down underneath his physical pain and the annoyance of failure was a growing uneasiness, not unmixed with a sort of preparatory anger, such as we are sometimes taught — seldom nowadays, thank God! — that our Father in heaven holds in store for all unborn generations of his children, who do not make formal acknowledgment of stated creeds.

With throbbing temples and this smoldering irritation in his breast, Gilbert plunged into the dark alley and again emerged into the hot sunlight, half-afraid to look toward the house, lest he should discover with his own eyes that John had disobeyed him.

We tremble at the thought of losing faith in God; what if God should lose faith in us?

Gilbert was the human father, not the divine; when he caught sight of John tying up some of Dorrie's sweet-peas, he lost faith in his own son. A rush of what he believed, for the instant, to be righteous indignation, swept over him as he moved up the hill, a self-appointed avenging Justice to the evil-doer.

“John!”

The boy looked up. Never in his life had he heard his name in that tone from his father's lips.

Two years before he would have simply stood still and looked his father in the eye, trustful to the last. But, alas, the sense of injustice done him by that tone and manner awoke in his own breast the demon of unfaith.

The moment a man is led to feel that God is angry with *him*, not with his sin, he begins to believe that God is not good; which is only another way of saying, "There is no God."

For a moment John knew the bitterness of an orphan. He felt that he was fatherless. He dared not resist. He braced himself, and returned the look sullenly.

"Come into the house!"

He followed this man (not his father) into the front room that now seemed strange and foreign to him. Could he ever have been at home there?

"What do you mean by disobeying me?"

Sullen silence.

"Answer me this minute!"

John raised his head without a word, and looked his father full in the face.

The little black-and-tan terrier crept into the room, and gazed from one to the other with a low whine.

There was more of divine in his eyes at that moment than in those above him.

Gilbert made a stride forward. John never moved a step.

Suddenly a change came over the man's face. He trembled from head to foot, and stretching out his arms caught the boy to his breast. In a moment father and son were crying.

"Kneel down with me, son," whispered Gilbert. And as they knelt, he prayed aloud.

"O God, Father of light, wilt thou forgive me and my boy. We have sinned against one another, and against thee. I was angry with the child thou didst give me, and I forgot that he was one of thy children, one of thy little ones, and that thou wert in him. Hold us both in thine arms, and help us to be one, even as thou and Christ are one."

For a long time neither of them spoke. Gilbert, it must be remembered, still thought that his commands had not been obeyed. He believed that a hard task lay before him — that of seeing his son humbled and suffering in repentance.

He waited in almost an agony for John to speak ; not to clear himself — he did not expect that — but to confess, and say he was sorry, and give his father a chance to forgive him.

At last words came.

"I'm sorry, father," sobbed the boy on his father's bosom. "I didn't mean to feel so and look so. I don't know how I could."

How tightly those arms held him !

"You know I was angry too, my boy, and did wrong speaking to you in that way."

"But—but you thought I disobeyed you. I went to Mr. Blakeman's this morning, before ever you told me."

There, it was all clear now. We will leave them together ; Gilbert sitting in the old, carved arm-chair, with the boy in his arms, the brown hair brushed by the gray beard, their eyes shining like stars after rain.

CHAPTER VII.

AN UGLY STRANGER.

DORRIE," said John, one day, "I wish you'd pay a visit to my mousehole."

"Oh, I never could get up there, John! It's as much as I can do to go straight ahead. The world I live in is just four feet and two inches deep. I can't get my head up out of it, except when I go upstairs, or when somebody lifts me."

This was rather a queer remark for a child of ten; but Dorrie was in some things far older than her mother.

"Well," said John conclusively, "that's just the way you'll get up into my mousehole. In the first place, it's a sort of upstairs; and in the second place, your father will lift you up."

"He is n't tall enough."

"He can stand on a box."

"But I shall be afraid."

"With me up there with you?"

"Is it big enough for two?"

"You see!"

"Let 's ask mother."

Martha was willing, if her husband should say it were safe and would lift her up and down. The two children accordingly set out for the shop, Dorrie walking demurely with her human and wooden canes, and John keeping a sharp lookout for teams, rude boys, or stray dogs of uncertified character.

Terry pattered along in the rear, as usual, full of importance.

John was especially glad to have something pleasant to do on this particular afternoon, because he was very lonesome. Just one week before, his father had left him to go to a town some distance away in the country. Work had been offered him on a large public building that was going up, and as it would be a steady job for at least six weeks, with sure and generous pay, he felt that he ought not to neglect the opportunity. It was the first separation between him and his boy, and a hard trial to both; but they made mutual promises to write and to be brave, and planned a grand excursion down the harbor to celebrate the father's return, which would be some time in the latter part of July, if nothing unforeseen should detain him.

John indicated to Dorrie various points of interest on their walk, which seemed to him about half its usual length, although their progress was necessarily slow.

They were within a few doors of the shop, when an ill-conditioned cur, who had been lying on the sidewalk with one eye open, got upon his feet and, with an ugly, snarly bark, began making short rushes toward them.

Dorrie turned white as a sheet, and clung to John so that he could not leave her nor use his arms. Matters really began to look rather serious, when a black-and-tan streak shot past them, and Terry, with a shrill yelp, flung himself, teeth, claws, and what little body he had, full into the face and eyes of the strange dog.

The latter fell back — to Terry's relief, no doubt — and, with a glance at John, who by this time had got possession of Dorrie's cane and was brandishing it in the air, slunk away with his tail between his legs; while Terry the valiant came capering back to his young master, wriggling all over with exultation at his exploit and, possibly, at his own fortunate escape.

"I've seen that dog before," said John, patting Terry and giving Dorrie her cane. "It's the

same one that fought poor little Terry the first time I ever set eyes on him. Don't you know? I told you about it."

"Yes, I remember," said Dorrie faintly. "He is a dreadful dog. Do let's hurry, John. He might come back."

"No fear of that," laughed John. "Terry scared him out of his wits—didn't you, good boy? But here we are anyway."

On entering the shop, John was by no means pleased to find Mr. Wilson talking with the dark-browed owner of the dog. He recalled the face perfectly; for one of his gifts was never to forget a face upon which his attention had once been fixed. The man, however, seemed to have no recollection of him, but giving a final direction of some sort, over which the carpenter appeared perplexed, he left the shop and slouched away, followed by the setter.

At first Mr. Wilson did not seem much pleased with the children's visit. His manner was pre-occupied, and he hardly listened to their merry greetings. At length, however, his easy good-nature came back, and he was ready to listen to their request that his little daughter should be placed in the "mousehole."

He shook his head, but Dorrie looked so disappointed that he yielded and began looking about the shop for some means to get her up so high without danger.

There was an old chest under the bench which the two carpenters used for storing extra tools and incomplete bits of nice work. This he pulled out and dragged under John's lofty perch. The boy was already up, awaiting his visitor.

Mr. Wilson took Dorrie in his arms and carefully mounted the chest. By this means he was able to lift her up to the outside shelf, from which point she could take care of herself.

John had prepared a nice couch of shavings, covered with an old coat, for her. He himself did not share the mousehole with her, after all, it was so small. But he sat on the shelf with his feet hanging over, and talked with her as she lay snugly in the little wooden cave.

While they were chatting, the owner of the ugly dog came back. He brought some rolls of paper with him, which appeared to be plans of a building. Wilson bent over them, and the two men discussed some point long and earnestly.

John could not hear what they were talking about, but the stranger, who was addressed as

Hurlburt, seemed to be urging the carpenter to do something which he was unwilling to carry out.

As they talked, however, their voices grew louder.

“What difference does it make?” said Hurlburt. “Somebody will do it, if you don’t. The only thing you’ll get by it will be to lose a good job, and set me tramping all over the city again for another carpenter. If you’d ’a’ said the word the other day when I spoke to you about it — Get out, Whelp!” — with a savage kick at his ill-favored dog, who was beginning to make a slow, bristling approach toward Terry — “I could ’a’ told ’em about it, and that would ’a’ settled the business.”

John jumped down, caught Terry in his arms, and climbed to his perch again like a squirrel.

“There,” he whispered to Dorrie, “I did that for two reasons. First, so that that ugly creature should n’t hurt Terry, and then I wanted to be sure that they knew we were here. Now it will do no harm to listen all we want to.”

“What nonsense you talk!” Hurlburt was saying, with a sneer. “One piece of wood’s like another, and one room’s like another. Don’t a church make as good a blaze as a” —

"Hush! hush!" interposed Wilson nervously. "There's no need of talking this over, Mr. Hurlburt. I don't see how I can do it. Not till my partner gets home, at any rate."

"Your partner!" began the other, with a sneer, but Wilson stopped him by a glance and a gesture toward the mousehole, and the two attentive little mice at its entrance.

"Well, I'll tell you one thing," said Hurlburt, bringing his fist down hard on the bench; "if you go back on your agreement" —

"I never agreed."

"I say you did! And if you don't carry out what you gave the company to understand you'd do, you'll have to pay for it. Didn't you take five dollars we handed you, in this very shop, me and O'Callaghan?"

"Yes; but that was only" —

"Never mind what it was for. You took it, and that binds you to the contract," asserted the man, with an oath that made Dorrie stop her ears.

Then, fearing he had gone too far, he added in more conciliatory tones, "Don't be a fool, Wilson. We've had a meeting, and the directors have voted to employ you to fit up the shop, and to

pay you a thousand dollars to do it in good shape. There'll be a good two hundred and fifty or three hundred dollars clear profit. You might as well have it as the next man. If you go back on us, we've got to call another meeting, hunt up another man, and spend a lot of money, which you might have to pay for breaking your contract."

"I told you I never made a contract," said the carpenter weakly.

"There'd be a lawsuit, anyway, and that would cost you something, whether you beat or not, besides hurting your business. Think it over, and let me know to-morrow. I'll drop in. Come along, you ——" But I will not try to put his language on paper. He lounged out of the shop.

"O papa, he's left his papers behind him! John, do make him take them — such a dreadful man! Papa, are n't you glad he's gone?"

John jumped down, and was about to run after the man with the plans, but Mr. Wilson interposed, almost crossly, and tossed them up on a high rack, behind the handles of a lot of chisels.

"Don't bother me now, John," he said. "I wish you'd take Dorrie home. I'm busy, and besides, I don't like to have her down here, among rough men."

John secretly wondered if the ugly stranger would have used such language in the presence of his father, and, if so, what would have been the result. He was pretty certain it would not have been he and Dorrie that would have had to leave the shop.

However, obedience was, as we have seen, a strong point with him; and he silently helped Dorrie down into her father's arms and then walked away with her, wondering much at what he had seen and heard.

Dorothy, poor child, evidently felt humiliated by the shabby figure her father had cut in that afternoon's episode.

"I never want to go into that shop again," she said, with trembling lip, "if that's the kind of men" —

"Oh, it is n't," protested John, eagerly. "I never saw anybody like that in the shop before. And if my father had only been there" —

He stopped suddenly as he saw the crimson fly to his little comrade's cheek.

A proud tear slowly rolled down. She half-withdrew her hand from his arm, hopped helplessly for a minute, struck her foot against the curbing, and would have fallen had John not held her up.

"O Dorrie!" he said repentantly, with all the dismay a man feels when a woman refuses to trust his support, "I did n't mean anything by that. Only, only, you see" — he stumbled on, "father never lets anybody" —

Luckily a crowded crossing made a diversion at this point, and John, who was in straits between honesty and chivalry, was not compelled to finish his sentence.

Rather to the surprise of both children Mr. Wilson did not say a word about the new business to Martha that evening; at least not in their hearing; and as she made no allusion to it next day it was pretty clear that she had not been consulted in the mysterious affair which concerned her husband and the "ugly-dog man" as Dorrie persisted in calling Mr. Hurlburt.

It was equally plain, however, that the matter had not been dismissed from the carpenter's mind. He looked worn and anxious when he came home from the shop at night, and spoke irritably to Dorrie, when she was responsible for some slight mishap at table.

Her eyes filled with tears as she left her seat, and taking her crutch, which she now rarely used, limped away to her bed.

That night John had a strange dream. Finding Mr. Wilson poor company — Martha never understood him beyond the realm of bread-and-milk — and missing his father more than ever, he had waited a little while, disconsolately, for Dorrie to come down; then, seeing that she had really gone to bed, he followed her example, and saying good night to the carpenter and his wife, passed through the long bare hall and upstairs to his little garret corner in the farthest wing.

Mrs. Wilson, it should in justice be observed, had offered to make up a bed for Dorrie in her own room and let John occupy Dorrie's while Gilbert Kent was away from home. But the boy had preferred his own corner, where, somehow, he felt nearer his father.

It is a curious fact that the dearer a friend is to us the better we can do without him. Without his physical presence to our senses, I mean. If Dorrie had gone away for a week, John would have had hard work not to cry; and at any rate would have felt leagues and ages removed from her, though she were only at the other end of the city. But with his father it was a different matter. There was a certain fine sympathy between them which was triumphant over time and

space. They were always in each other's presence; and John would have blushed quite as guiltily to have spoken aloud an unseemly word in the loneliest Arctic solitude as in the veritable hearing of the man who still stood to him very much in the place of God.

Accordingly, when John crept into his bed and listened to the far-off roar of the city streets, now dying away in the dusk, the sharp notes of steam-whistles from the harbor, mellowed and softened by distance, — as his dream-fancies began to float in through the open, netted window (for it was a sultry night) and weave mazy, misty fabrics around the walls and projecting rafters above him, — there was a constant and vivid sense of his father's life and love breathing around him.

For if God stationed his angels at the head and the foot of the bed that night, he knew — as when the Galilæan peasant went apart so often on the shadowy slopes of the Palestine hills to pray — that no more blessed thought could they bring the boy than "Father."

But the hurrying, worrying, care-taking thoughts of the preceding day claim a position too by our bedsides at night. If the sleeper has chosen

them as his companions by day, let him not complain that they rejoin him in his dreams.

John had not been asleep more than an hour before he began to twist and turn uneasily.

He dreamed he was walking in a great meadow, where the grass was fresh and green, brooks ran on every side and in every direction, uphill and down. Terry was with him, gamboling about and dashing in and out of the brooks.

Before long he noticed that Dorrie was beside him, but it seemed that it troubled her a great deal to walk in the grass, which grew taller and more wiry as they went on.

And now a little streamlet ran between them. It was very small, but it worried him.

“Come over, Dorrie!” he called, in his dream.

But she laughed and limped along through the tall grass.

They came to a high mountain, and began to climb its sides, and, as they climbed, the brook, instead of dwindling nearer its source, became larger and fiercer, so that he could no longer stretch his hand across and touch her.

“Come over, come over, Dorrie!” he called. But the child only waved her little hand to him. She no longer laughed, and if she spoke her

words were lost in the roar of the stream, which was now a brawling torrent, ever growing broader and fiercer as they climbed.

How he longed to help his little comrade! He could see her stumble, and bruise her delicate hands and her one poor foot against the stones; but he could not go to her. All he could hope for was that he could somehow get round the source of the stream.

And now a shadowy form appeared beside her; it was the "ugly-dog man," with his beast snarling beside him.

Dorrie turned and held out her hands beseechingly; but her own father seized them and held them down.

John knew that he must get round that stream or she would die. He pressed onward, higher and higher, till there was no trace of tree or grass or living thing about him; only cold gray rocks. And from one of these sprang the full might of the stream.

He dragged himself heavily up on its flat top, and turning, looked for Dorrie. She was nowhere to be seen.

Neither she nor either of her companions. But close beneath the rock, in the darkness, he

could hear the two men talking in low tones. They must then have killed her.

With his very blood standing still with horror, he leaned over the edge of the rock, and — awoke !

His first thought, as consciousness came rushing in upon him, was that intense feeling of relief that accompanies awakening from a bad dream ; his first physical sensation was one of cold.

The next moment he was bewildered by hearing the two men talking again in guarded tones, beneath him. Could he have sunk once more beneath the smooth flood of sleep, from which he had emerged for a moment ?

With an effort he opened his eyes, and stared about him in amazement. Dreaming still ? No ; the wind that blew his little nightgown about his bare legs was real. The twinkling stars were real, and so were the voices. Instead of looking upon the familiar walls of his room, his gaze wandered helplessly off into the black night. Beside him was a wooden post. Below, in the garden, was a whitish, motionless, hairy creature, which he recognized, with a thrill of repugnance, as the ill-bred setter ; and — yes — leaning against the fence just beyond was his master, talking earnestly with

another dark figure, which could only be Mr. Wilson.

How he got there he did not know ; but beyond a doubt John Kent was at that moment in the little cupola, with the night air breathing about him and the trapdoor shut below.

CHAPTER VIII.

MIDNIGHT.

WITH a thrill of terror John realized that, by some strange volition which he could not call his own, he had left his comfortable bed, had crept down to the dark, bare hall below, and up the steep, narrow flight to the cupola, while he was sound asleep. He was terrified, not only by the thought that another step, an imaginary leap, in his dream, toward Dorrie, might have hurled him headlong to the roof and ground below ; but still more by the eerie sensation of a second self which had led him there. He felt he had been, to use a common phrase, "beside himself" ; and he did not know what his other, unreasoning, sleep-walking self might do next.

He was rather relieved, than otherwise, to hear the voices below him, and would have called out in another moment, had not the men separated while he was still gathering his senses : Hurlburt picking his way out of the alley, with Whelp ; and

Thomas Wilson entering his own door and softly closing it behind him.

The night wind was cool, though not dangerously so, and John bethought himself of returning to his bed. As he stooped toward the door, he suddenly remembered his father's caution. The trap could not be opened from the upper side.

There was no way to descend to the roof, as the cupola was seven feet, clear, above the ridge-pole. And had he dropped safely upon it, he could have got no further. Nothing was left but to cry out and rouse the Wilsons, which he was unwilling and a little bit ashamed to do, or to stay where he was all night.

In truth, he was not much dismayed at the prospect before him. Mrs. Wilson, he knew, would be early stirring; and the milkman would be even earlier. John laid a plan by which he would get the man into the house, and up the stairs to let him down. To be sure, it was not so warm as in his bed, and occasionally a little wiry trumpet-tone in his ear would remind him that it was the mosquito's harvest time. As, however, the gentle breeze was south, he was comfortably warm, especially as, by some freak of his dream, he had drawn on his stockings before leaving his room.

Overhead the elm, now in full leafage, stretched its protecting boughs, and through the sleepy, nodding leaves he could catch the twinkles of stars.

The night was very still. He heard a far-off clock striking the hour, and listened. How long it was in telling its story!

“Seven — eight — nine — ten — eleven.”

Eleven o'clock. In four hours there would be a gray hope of dawn in the east. Two hours later the milkman might be expected.

The roar of the city had died away, so that the faintest rustle of the leaves above him could be heard.

John curled up in one corner of the cupola, and wondered what his father was dreaming. He dozed a little himself, but was almost afraid to go to sleep, lest his invisible shadow-self should lead him into new dangers. He was roused by the clocks striking again — twelve, this time.

Have you ever been out in the streets alone at midnight? If you have not, close beside you, at your very door, lies a region of which you have never dreamed, or which, at least, is to you but a dream. Its bounds are ill-defined; it stretches away into space illimitably; it is thronged with

silent shapes, in whose midst you, not one of them, would be the ghost.

Close beside you, yet unknown ; at your very door, yet farther from you than the steppes of Caucasus—this midnight city.

In spots where you are accustomed to see only fair daylight are uneasy, shifting shadows and gloomy folds of darkness ; while the yellow, flaring gaslight, or the white dazzle of the electric ball of fire, throws an uncanny light into many a nook and corner that has lain hidden in broad noonday. Close beside you, but unknown.

The silence of the busy streets where the wheels of trade and travel have rolled and rattled, and shouts of men and cries and laughter of children have answered each other above the din, all day long, is even more strange and terrible than the shadows and lights. To stand in one of those streets alone at midnight, with no sound coming from the thoroughfare in its sleep save an occasional muffled roll of wheels, bearing some belated traveler, or hurrying physician summoned to a bedside of sudden anguish, is like sitting beside one in the silence of the sick chamber, who is not dead, but stricken dumb and motionless in the midst of active life by that terrible disease which

touches three times before it destroys, playing with the half-benumbed sufferer for years between its first and last visit.

And as the long, troubled breath of the helpless man, at intervals, through the weary night watches, falls upon your ear, so does the dull roll upon the distant pavement, dying away into waiting silence, in the city streets alone at midnight.

Have you read of the palace where every man, woman, and child suddenly fell asleep? and did you try, when a child yourself, to conceive the feelings of the prince, as he trod those dusty halls and looked upon the prostrate forms of knight and lady, of page, butler, and hound?

Close beside you, during a third part of your whole life, lies such a palace, such a country. What would you think were the sun suddenly to go down at noon, leaving only the blackness of the earth-shadowed sky behind it; and far and near, thousands of human beings — yes, and the very cattle, the brute life that clings to the higher existence of man — should yield up its consciousness, falling back into deep sleep; the tangled and knotted meshes of business relaxing, and the uproar of the morning struck dumb? Yet it is

through such a city that you may walk alone, any night of your life. For it is close beside you, yet unknown.

But not all are asleep. As in the lowermost caves of the earth strange, pallid reptiles are found, with hideous forms and eyeless sockets, for lack of the sweet air and light of outer day, so are there evil things that creep from their hiding places at night, and slink through the streets and byways, on unspeakable errands of shame and crime. In the great cave of the night sky they live, rejoicing—with what joy!—in their sunless existence.

By day their hands are unnerved, they cower in dark chambers and lurking places; but the gloom of night is a stimulant to them; they lift their heads and drink it in fiercely, until brain and hand are ready for deeds as dark as the hour and the place where they are committed. Not all the dreams of the great city are of green pastures and still waters; it has its nightmares and visions of horror.

As John Kent counted the twelve strokes of the distant bell, he could not help feeling a grim sense of terror steal over him. He had never been out-of-doors at midnight since he stood in

the snow by the gust-blown fire, while they bore his dead mother from the wrecked train. The recollection came back vividly to him, and he longed for some living, waking, human creature for companionship as he never had before.

In spite of every effort, the fright grew upon him; it would not be shaken off. He tried to say his prayers, but God seemed far away on the sunny side of the world. It would have been an intense relief to have seen even the lowering face of Hurlburt among the shadows on the ground below him.

Midnight. He recalled a story that Martha had foolishly told him a few days before, of a huge, misshapen Thing which was said to creep about after dark, seeking a fearful kind of food. Its feet were broad and soft, and so damp that they sometimes left slimy tracks which were found in the morning, where the creature had passed. It lived beneath the decaying wharves, and in foul, deserted cellars, never emerging except on the darkest night.

It is probable that Martha, when a child, had heard some sensational speaker describing Crime, or Evil, under the allegory of the frightful beast, and that the image, deeply imprinted on her young imagination, remained as she had repeated it to John.

When he had heard the story in broad daylight, he had laughed at it, even to the point of offending Martha; but now it seemed true, and as he glanced hurriedly around over the neglected tract in which the house stood, he shivered, not so much with cold as with the apprehension of seeing that dark, nameless blot of a Thing creeping towards him.

At that moment his heart almost stopped beating. Beyond a doubt something was stirring in the rooms below.

He heard a certain creak which he knew was caused by the lower door which opened into the hall. Then a soft, irregular tread upon the stairs.

It came to him in a moment that one of the creatures that Martha had described had its den in the cellar under that very house, which cellar he had never visited, and of the existence of which he had not been sure.

But of course there must be a cellar, and some secret way of getting out into that lonely, unfurnished hall. From there the easiest and, in fact, the only way for it to get out was to go through the cupola, from which, in the dead of night, it could let its big, soft body down upon the roofs, and from there to the ground.

As these thoughts flashed through the boy's mind, he watched the trapdoor with the fascination of terror. A thunderclap could not have drawn his gaze from that dark patch in the floor of the cupola. And there was literally no escape for him. He never thought of crying out; and if he had, it is doubtful if he could have spoken.

One step at a time he could hear the great splay feet ascending the stairs, which creaked and snapped beneath its weight. Would it never reach the top?

Hark! Now it was pushing about with its head and paws, softly, softly.

And at last the door moved. It opened a half-inch and then paused, showing the crack of darkness on three sides.

John did not faint, but he felt as if he were dying. Every particle of strength left his body. He could not move hand or foot, or gasp one word, any more than he could fly.

With eyes fixed upon that opening, behind which all the nightmared, sleep-walking horror of that night had concentrated, and was watching him in turn, he waited.

The door trembled, rose a little, stopped again, then opened slowly to its full height.

And from the stairway no black and formless monster looked up at him, but a little white face, with lips parted, eyes wide open, and golden hair falling about it.

“John!”

“Dorrie!”

CHAPTER IX.

THOMAS WILSON'S NEW JOB.

AS one result of John's exposure to the night air, a severe cold kept him away from the shop and within doors for the next three days.

When he heard Dorrie's story of that night, and her part in its adventures, he praised her bravery in such unmeasured terms that the child's heart beat high with happiness.

She had waked up, she said, in the middle of the night, and before turning her head on the pillow to go to sleep again, had glanced out of her window, from which there was a full view of the cupola. A startled second glance assured her that there was something odd about the structure. She rubbed her eyes. Yes, there was a small white figure seated in one corner of it.

For a moment Dorrie was very much frightened, even to the extent of putting her head under the bedclothes. Then it occurred to her that not only were there no such things as ghosts, anyway,

but that if there were, such a very little, young ghost could n't hurt her.

So she ventured to peep again. The figure had risen, and was looking down into the yard and beyond. (John was half-ashamed to tell what he was looking for; and to her credit be it said, Mrs. Wilson was wholly ashamed of herself when he confessed the final cause of his terrors.) There was something in the attitude of the little ghost which reminded Dorothy of her playmate and guardian. She could not signal it, on account of the netting across the window. She slipped out of bed, crept from the room without waking her mother; then downstairs and across the bare hall, her heart thumping at every mouse's squeak in the wainscoting, until she reached the narrow steps leading to the cupola, by which time she had got herself into almost as uncomfortable a fright as had John above her.

She had ventured to open the door, "just the least mite," and so discovered that it was really John.

It was the second time he had been rescued from a high place by one of God's angels who had been given charge over him: the first time it was his father in the shop; the second, it was crippled Dorrie in the cupola at night.

By the time the boy had related his adventures and his fears of the night-roaming creature, he could laugh heartily over them; but it was months before he could find himself unexpectedly alone at night, without a sudden sinking of the heart, and a nameless fright which could not be driven away, save by the thought of Dorrie and his father, and his Father.

Hurlburt did not appear about the house again, and John saw no reason for speaking of the conference of which he had been an unwilling witness. Nor did he relate his dream to any one. He came very near writing the whole story to his father, but concluded that it would worry him and make him do his work less well without doing any good. So he kept eyes and ears open, and was "seen, but not heard." Sometimes Dorrie would look into the heights of his brown eyes from the depths of her blue ones, and ask him in an anxious whisper if he thought the dog-man was troubling her father. At which John would only shake his head and answer that he did n't know.

Every morning, in these days when his father was away, the boy studied by himself or in Dorothy's company. For a whole week after their unpleasant experience he did not go near the shop at

all. When at last he reëntered it, he was struck with astonishment at the business going on there. Two new assistants had been hired, and the sound of hammer, mallet, and saw was constant. The shop, as well as the sidewalk outside, was encumbered with piles of black walnut and other costly lumber. Window-sashes and panels were stacked around posts and against the wall; everybody was working hard, in unsmiling silence, as if life or death depended on the speedy completion of the job in hand.

In the midst of these disordered beginnings stood Thomas in his shirt sleeves, the perspiration standing on his forehead, and his brows knotted in a careworn and hunted expression.

It flashed across John's brain that the men were hurrying to get something done before his father should return, and that he ought to write about it at once. For was not his father's name upon the sign outside the shop?

Still, he disliked telling tales, and resolved to wait until he should know that some harm was really being done.

Mr. Wilson gave him a careless nod as he entered, but paid no further attention to him. John quietly made his way to the end of the shop and in another moment was in his mousehole.

After resting a while he descended once more, and using one or two little tools that his father had bought for him, busied himself in constructing a slide, by which he could close the mouth of his den at pleasure, leaving only a narrow transverse crack for air and light.

He could not finish his portcullis that day, but hid his pieces of board in the hole. The next afternoon he resumed and completed his work. Retiring triumphantly into the recesses of his lofty burrow, he closed it and lay back in the shadows, watching the bright line of light across its mouth. No one from the outside would have guessed his presence, so cleverly had he constructed his door. The little platform now looked like a mere shelf for storing patterns.

Before long a familiar voice fell on his ear, and putting his eye to his loophole he found that he was not mistaken ; it was Hurlburt, together with another man, much more flashily dressed and redder in the face.

As Mr. Wilson knew that he was there, and John did not care to make a scene by emerging from his wall like the harlequin in a pantomime, he concluded to remain where he was. The conversation which followed shed a good deal of light

upon circumstances which had puzzled him not a little.

That we may have even a better understanding than had John of Thomas Wilson's situation at this time, it is necessary to give a brief glance at his life twenty years before.

When the roar of the guns that opened on Fort Sumter sent their sullen echoes rolling through the north, Thomas was one of the first to enlist in the loyal army. He marched south with a New Hampshire regiment, and served bravely from Bull Run to Appomatox. At the close of the war, when the country was rejoicing over the downfall of slavery, Wilson returned to his home village, himself a slave. The moment his friends saw him they glanced at each other pityingly, and said, "Poor fellow!"

Then the war began over again for him. He fought many a battle more terrible to him than Gettysburg or Antietam, a veritable "Battle of the Clouds," and at last, worn but triumphant, stood erect, a man again, without the scent of liquor upon him. None but those who have fought the same fight, or have seen some dear friend choking, fainting, struggling in that same fearful contest, can tell through what agony, what a valley of

the shadow of death, he passed, before he was safe.

He had not fought alone. Before he left home in response to Abraham Lincoln's first call, he had looked into the eyes of a rosy-cheeked lass, a neighbor's daughter, and although he had spoken no word and asked none that should bind them formally together—for she was but seventeen—he had borne the recollection of that last tearful moment, and the touch of her soft, trembling hand, through four years of wild camp life, and had brought the picture home unsmirched. If a young man carry in his mind a pure, sweet image, it will go hard but he will keep the casket undefiled as well as the treasure within. Thomas Wilson came home as clean-hearted as a child.

But oh, the thirst that blazed in his veins, to his very finger ends! The very hand that again clasped Martha's quivered with mad longing for whiskey.

He did the best thing—the best two things—that lay in his power. He told God about it, and prayed for his help; then he went straight from his closet to Martha's house, told her about it, and prayed for *her* help. Both his prayers were answered. He was a conqueror.

When he had gone a full year without touching a drop of intoxicating liquor, Martha married him. Up to the time when we have seen him at his shop and at the old Boston house, he was the same conqueror, and would no more have deliberately placed a glass of rum or even wine to his lips than he would have laid the muzzle of a loaded revolver against the same spot and pulled the trigger.

If you have a Revised Version of the New Testament at hand, or better still, if you read the musical and unfailing Greek, look at the thirteenth verse of the fourth chapter of St. Luke. "Until a fitting season"; that is what the tempter looked forward to, and bided his time for, as he unfolded his black pinions — nay, I do not think the Devil can fly, even on sooty wings — as he slunk away from the grand, simple, august Being to whom he had whispered his evil suggestions.

As in the Palestine desert, and upon the sublime mountain heights, so in the commonplace of modern city life, the same Tempter waits "for a fitting season." When Thomas Wilson bade Martha and Dorrie good-by one sunny morning, stepping lightly down the path and out into the streets on his way to the shop, he whistled a few bars of an old war tune, "The girl I left behind me," and

walked along the crowded sidewalk, smiling over old and sweet memories, all unconscious that the "season" had come.

Could we foresee the conflicts into which our dear ones march so gayly, every day of our lives, how we should shudder and weep for sympathy, and go down on our knees in agonized prayer for the arm of the Almighty, the God of battles, to be around them, as the women of both north and south wept and prayed a generation ago, when the gray or blue uniforms disappeared down the dusty street and the last echoes of martial music died away, leaving the half-homes, the helpless, aching hearts behind!

That morning Martha, catching her husband's cheerfulness, sang at her work, while the Prince of darkness, crouching behind the bold, reckless eyes of Ralph Hurlburt, Thomas Wilson's old comrade in Company B, exulted fearfully that the "fitting season" for his ruin was at hand.

The first words which Ralph spoke after the greeting were familiar to the other's ear.

"What 'll you take, Tom?"

Wilson blushed hotly.

"Thanks, old fellow; I — I" —

"Sworn off, eh? Oh, well, you'll come round

before long. What are you doing for a living nowadays?"

"Hammer and saw," said Wilson, relieved to have the former subject disposed of, even by a careless sneer.

"Humph. I'm in something better than carpentering any day."

"What's that?"

Thomas did not like his old comrade as well as he used to on Virginia soil. The first flush of feeling on meeting a fellow-soldier having worn off, the man seemed to him coarse and low. There was something brutal and untrustworthy in his face. His lips fell as naturally into a sneer as a baby's into a smile.

"Well," said Hurlburt slowly, in answer to the other's last question, "if you're one of those — teetotalers, perhaps you would n't be interested to know." And after his oath, he blew a long whiff of smoke from his cigar.

"All right," said Thomas cheerfully, "perhaps I should n't. Good-by, old fellow — here's my tent. Drop in some time."

With which rather lukewarm invitation he gave a laughing military salute, and entering the shop, closed the door behind him.

For some reason he did not care to mention to Gilbert Kent, who was there before him, his re-discovered acquaintance; especially after John had come running in, as we have seen, with the story of the first exciting and nearly fatal encounter of Terry, then unnamed, with Ralph's ill-tempered follower, Whelp.

It was some time before the ex-soldier returned or saw Wilson again. The latter was rather glad than sorry for this, and never alluded to Hurlburt before his partner or his family.

One afternoon, a little while before Gilbert and his son moved from Mrs. Roberts', the two went home to the boarding-house, for some reason, an hour or two earlier than usual.

No sooner had they turned the corner than Ralph, who apparently had been watching for their departure, approached from the opposite direction. Entering the shop he greeted Wilson as if nothing had happened, and began to unfold a plan in which he wanted the other's assistance.

In company with half a dozen other men, some of them among the largest tax-payers in the city, he had formed a corporation, chartered under the laws of the Commonwealth, as "The Open Hand Supply Company," licensed to do business as

victuallers and keepers of a restaurant in a certain much-frequented locality in East Boston.

"What we propose to do is this," explained Hurlburt, warming up to his subject: "the regular old-fashioned saloon is gone by. We leave that to a low class of customers. Now the 'coffee houses,' that they are making so much talk about, are cutting out the saloons everywhere. 'Cause why? They fix them up better. They put money into 'em, and give 'em plate glass windows, an' games, an' big, high-studded rooms; make 'em real pleasant and homelike for young fellers that are boardin' round and have n't much of a place to stay in evenings. That's what we've got to do," said Ralph enthusiastically; "make it homelike for 'em. Fit it up regardless of cost. Lay ourselves out on gas and coal, silver plate and veneering."

Thomas was man enough to feel his blood run cold, and his fists clenched involuntarily as he listened to the scheme.

Had Ralph stopped there, the man before him would have been safe. But the tempter went on hastily, seeing, perhaps, the disgust in Thomas' honest face.

"Speaking of veneering brings me right to the

point. The directors have held a meeting and appointed me to let out contracts for the fitting up. The plumber's all fixed and the painters. Now for the woodwork. There'll be a lot of it, and a mighty expensive kind, where's a big chance for profit. Thinks I, there's Tom Wilson — just the man we want! — a good faithful workman that knows his business, and won't charge us more than the job's worth — and here I am."

Poor Wilson was bewildered. All the manliness in him, that had fought its hundred battles and finally won, urged him to reject the offer.

"I don't know," he faltered, wiping his forehead. "The fact is, Hurlburt, I have sworn off, as you said, and I don't like to have anything to do with helping on the business."

"Oh, come, that's all — nonsense, and you know it. If you don't do the job, somebody else will, and like as not it'll be some good-for-nothing fellow who will drink it all up in three weeks. Besides, you have n't any right to think of yourself. There's your wife and child. A few hundred dollars extra on your income this year would make a heap of difference in their comfort. Almost buy that little lame girl a carriage."

Thomas winced, and Hurlburt instantly saw his advantage.

"Don't decide right off," he said, with apparent indifference, as he lighted a fresh cigar and started toward the door. "O'Callaghan and I will see you a day or two later, and you can be making up your mind. I could pay you half down, by the way, in advance, you know, if you'd like the money for anything special. Perhaps the little gal — what's her name? Dorothy? — has a birthday coming, or something. Good day, old chap."

"Good-by."

Ralph put his head in at the window.

"Guess I would n't say anything to him about it," with a jerk of his thumb toward Gilbert's sign. "You're the only man I want in it. No need of dividing profits."

The next day he did not return. If he had come, Thomas had a flat refusal ready for him. The second day passed, and Thomas wished he would come that he might refuse him and be done with it; the third day, and the harassed carpenter was afraid he would come. That day he came.

In his company was a smooth-talking companion, the O'Callaghan referred to. Between

them they induced Wilson to accept five dollars, to invest for them in samples of veneers.

At the next visit, when John and Dorothy were unwilling spectators, Hurlburt frightened his dupe into half-subjection by the threat of a suit, as the children had heard.

Now the real fact was that Ralph had invented the story of the directors' meeting, and the acceptance of Wilson as contractor for the wood-work. Nor was it true, as Hurlburt well knew, that the transfer of five dollars, under those circumstances, bound the carpenter to undertake the job. There can be no contract where the minds of the parties have not met, says the law. But Wilson, like most men of his condition, regarded the law as a most complex and mysterious system, whereby one man's money could be turned over to another in the twinkling of an eye, and fortunes would change hands by reason of an informality in the dotting of an *i* or the crossing of a *t*. In real fact, if you ask yourself what is the sensible view of any mooted question of personal rights or property, ninety-nine times out of a hundred you will find that is the law in the case. Another phrase for "common law" might well be "common sense."

But of this Wilson was profoundly ignorant. He felt bound, hand and foot, when he went home that night to his wife and the children, and, when he heard a low whistle of an old camp air outside the house late in the evening, he accepted Ralph's visit as part of the inevitable. Soon he began to argue himself into believing that he was doing nothing wrong, even if it were an entirely voluntary act on his part. Ralph's sophistries did their quiet work.

"Somebody must do it. If I don't, another will. The only difference will be that he will have the money and I won't. The bar will be fitted up just as well. And how am I responsible for the use they put it to? A man who manufactures a pistol is n't a murderer because in a month or two later, perhaps, the deadly shot is fired from it. All I do is to put up a certain amount of woodwork. It's none of my business what it's used for, any more than I inquire into the use of any other article that I make in my shop, and sell to a customer."

It was a slippery, downhill train of reasoning, and Thomas' descent, after the first drawing back, was easy. He ordered the lumber, hired new hands, and worked, himself, as he had never

worked before. In his secret heart, as John had divined, he wanted to get the job out of his hands before Gilbert Kent should return.

Whether Ralph Hurlburt had at this time deliberately planned the downfall of his old messmate, I do not know. It is certain, however, that to a man who indulges in any wrongful pursuit it is a thorn in the path to see another person holding himself conscientiously aloof from the same course. The almost inevitable reasoning is: "Let's see whether he's as good as he seems. It's all well enough for him to hold his head up, pretending to be better than anybody else; a little come-down will do him good. I hate a man who looks down on a fellow and rides a high horse. Let's try him."

So the snares were laid for poor, foolish Thomas Wilson. When he had once put his hand to the work he could not withdraw it, nor object to Ralph's frequent presence in the shop. Moreover it was necessary for him to visit the new rooms in East Boston at the outset, to make certain measurements and calculations. He steadily refused all offers of liquor, though the street was lined with shops where it was sold openly.

One hot day Ralph poured out a glass of lemon-

ade and carelessly passed it to him. He raised it to his lips, but before a drop had passed them, he lowered the tumbler, looked the man in the eye, and walking to the door, poured the lemonade into the gutter. Reëntering the room, he set the glass down without a word, and went home.

Ralph ground his teeth and swore. The dash of whiskey in the cool drink had accomplished nothing, he thought; though he might have changed his mind had he seen Thomas Wilson cowering in a corner of the ferryboat cabin, shivering from head to foot, with clenched fists and great beads of perspiration on his forehead. People thought he was drunk; and so, in a measure, he was. The smell had set him on fire. Half the night he walked the floor of his room, telling his anxious wife that he had a headache and could n't sleep.

Ralph, meanwhile, grew more viciously determined.

"Jake," said he, to an obsequious, unwholesome-looking bartender, "we must try the sidewalk dodge. Did Mannheim & Co. send down that extra keg?"

Jake nodded flabbily, with a wide and unmirthful smile. The trade were familiar with the gen-

erosity of the wholesale dealers, who often threw in an extra keg of superfine liquor, in dealing with a profitable retailer, for the express purpose of sprinkling the sidewalk in front of the saloon, that the poor wretch who had to pass that way might be caught in the fumes and nervelessly stray in, past the green baize door, in spite of his good resolutions. This is no imaginary horror; investigate for yourselves, and you will find it to be literal, horrible fact. The retail rumseller poisons the air with the deadly exhalations of his foul stock in trade; the wholesale dealer and the manufacturer grow wealthy on the sales; and the Commonwealth — which God save! — permits the city of Boston to seal the license with its own fair image of dimpling wave and heaven-pointing church spire. There are only two in the chain of events who do not grow rich by this hideous traffic — the drunkard, shrieking in his torment of delirium, and God, the Father of all.

“Give it a good dose, Jake,” said Ralph, with an answering leer to the underling’s glance. “We’ll fetch him to-morrow, sure.”

“I must go over to East Boston,” argued Thomas Wilson miserably, to himself, late the next afternoon. “The whole job must stop if I

don't get that piece of molding clear in my mind. John," he added aloud, "tell Martha, when you go back, that I sha'n't be home before seven. Perhaps she'll wait supper for me."

That was a feeble grasp at something better than his trembling resolutions — a thread, which he would take over with him, still binding him to Martha and Dorrie ; she would be waiting supper for him.

But she waited in vain. For Thomas did not come to supper, nor indeed to his home, all that night.

CHAPTER X.

A VISIT TO LADY COURTLEY.

MRS. COURTLEY," said Waldo Pettingill, as he seated himself beside that lady one evening in Mrs. Roberts' snug parlor, "I'm afraid a friend of yours is getting into trouble."

"Trouble? What do you mean, Mr. Pettingill? Who is it?"

"Why, that Mr. Wilkins — Wilbur — What's his name?"

Mr. Pettingill had a singular inaptitude for remembering names.

"Oh, you mean Mr. Wilson, where the Kents live? I hope he is n't sick," said Lady Courtley, in troubled tones.

She had dropped the Evening Transcript, which was her one literary dissipation, and was looking so earnestly at her companion that it quite unnerved him.

"Why, n-no, to be sure, ma'am. He's not sick — that is, well — not exactly sick, you know."

“Oh, he’s well, then?”

“Well, not exactly well, as you’d say.”

Waldo was at a loss to express himself delicately. The lady waited for him to untangle himself, well knowing that this was the only road to coherency of statement.

“In fact,” said Waldo, “I’m afraid he is occasionally, only occasionally, you know — and not so very then, for that matter. I often see him on the ferryboat, nowadays, when he is n’t; — but sometimes he is” —

“Well, is what, Mr. Pettingill?”

“Dr — ah — intoxicated, ma’am.”

Mrs. Courtley gave a start of surprise and distress.

“Are you sure? You know so many are misjudged.”

“I wish — I — ah — was not so sure, I am sure,” began Waldo precipitately. Then checked himself on the raveled edge of another tangle of words. “My experience, ma’am, in the — ah — line of intoxicated persons is, unfortunately, pretty large. They seem to cross a good deal by the ferry. And then there’s a place just in the rear of our establishment where such persons are frequently found mornings with their heads very low

and red ; and how they can manage to sleep with nothing over them but tin clipping, and nothing under them but damaged cans, I never could see," added the young man, in a tone of mild exhortation, as if Mrs. Courtley had been warmly advocating such furnishings for a bedroom.

His companion, however, had hardly heard the description.

"Terrible, terrible!" she exclaimed. "And to think of John, and that delicate child Dorothy! Has Gilbert Kent come home, do you know, Mr. Pettingill?"

"No, ma'am. Leastwise, he had n't day before yesterday, when I went down to look at Miss Dorrie's sweet peas. And Mrs. Wilson said he was n't expected for two or three weeks yet. He had written John that the work took him longer than he had thought 't would."

"And do you think she knows about her husband's habits?"

"I'm afraid she does, ma'am. Her eyes were that red, and Miss Dorrie looked as white and peaked as a — chiny vase," concluded Waldo sadly, his eyes wandering vaguely about the room in search of an object to compare Dorrie with, and finally alighting on a pair of peculiarly

consumptive and long-waisted Parian vases, on Mrs. Roberts' mantel.

"Poor child! poor child! I must go and see them at once. And yet — When is Mr. Wilson at home?"

"You can't tell, nowadays. He's liable to drop in 'most any time, I guess. Two or three times I've got as far as the garden fence and then turned round and come back without going in, seeing him inside and thinking they would n't perhaps like to have company," said Mr. Pettengill, blushing at the acknowledgment of his own gentle consideration for his friends.

Lady Courtley rose and walked slowly up and down the room, her companion regarding her with sympathy not unmixed with awe.

"I don't know what to do," she said at length. "I don't believe, after all, they'd want to see me. You were right about company, Waldo."

The young man blushed vividly again, to his pale eyebrows, which looked positively white against the crimson background. This time the blush was for pleasure at being admired and at being addressed by his first name.

"Why don't you write to John, ma'am? That boy's so wonderful knowing, that he'd know what to do, I do believe."

“That’s just what I’ll do. Will you excuse me?”

She hurried to her room, and in ten minutes had the following note written, directed, and sealed:—

My dear John Kent,—I hear that a great trouble has come to your house. Can I help you or your kind friends in any way? My heart aches for little Dorrie. Please come to me a few minutes to-morrow, if possible, and tell me all about it.

Your old friend,

AUGUSTA COURTLEY.

When she reached the parlor, Mr. Pettingill had gone out for his constitutional—a matter of principle with him.

Lady Courtley therefore handed the letter to a slovenly table girl, asking her if she would kindly step out to the corner and mail it.

The girl was going to a party that night, and concluded to put off the mailing of the letter, as her time for making her ball toilet was short, until she should start out with Michael for the dance. So she slipped the letter into the pocket of her kitchen gown, while she wiped the supper dishes; then ran upstairs, from basement to attic, bundled herself out of her everyday calico into her

party attire, and having heard Michael's ring at the lower door while she was doing up her hair, previous to donning her finery, hurried down to her lover, and chatted with him all the way to the hall.

In the meantime Nora, the cook, found the letter lying on the attic floor, where it had fallen from Bridget's pocket, and placed it on the sill of the window, which was open. A puff of wind whisked it out ; and that was the last ever seen of it.

Lady Courtley waited anxiously for John all the next day, expecting every moment to hear his cheery voice outside her door. The second day passed without sight of him. On the evening of the third she made up her mind to call at the Wilsons' the following day, at all hazards. But within an hour from the time when she had formed her resolution, she was forestalled by John himself, who knocked at her door just as she had retired for the night, it then being after ten o'clock.

"Wait a minute, dear," she cried as he announced his name. "I'll come right down into the parlor. Don't disturb anybody else, but wait for me there."

John did as he was bidden.

A feeble light was burning at the further end of the room, which seemed to the boy to have grown smaller since he left it. He sat down in one corner of a bony, haircloth sofa, and tried to think over the events of the last two or three weeks, and what had taken place since that house was his home. It seemed as if his father must walk in through that familiar door, toward which John had so often turned with eager anticipation at the close of a stormy, dreary afternoon.

At the Wilsons', matters had of late gone from bad to worse. Martha knew in a moment what had detained her husband when he came home the morning after his first fall. The signs of disgrace were but too familiar to her; the uncertain step, the trembling hand, the averted glance, the baleful scent of the poison — all proclaimed aloud that the days of old had returned.

Dorrie had no idea of the nature of her father's trouble. She was told that he was "not well," and with her little palm tried to cool the hot, throbbing forehead.

For a day or two renewed resolutions and pledges kept him out of harm's way; then came another misstep, and another, until the momentum became fearful. Even Dorothy at last began

to have an inkling of the truth. She would watch for her father's step at night, and turn deadly pale as its irregular shuffle told the same story, again and again. The child, from an inborn delicacy, and loyalty to both father and mother, never opened her lips on the subject. She grew so slight that it seemed but a breath of harsh wind would extinguish the frail spark burning behind those two wide open blue eyes.

She used her crutch now constantly. John made up his mind that if matters did not change within a few days for the better he would run the risk of writing to his father; though he felt in his heart that perhaps even he would be hopeless before the terrible disease that was devouring Thomas Wilson, body and soul. But before he wrote the letter, and threw the burden on his father, he would first consult his dear old friend, Lady Courtley.

Thomas had not come home to supper; and that meant, they all knew, his return at midnight brutalized with drink.

John had sat up playing checkers with Dorrie till her bedtime. Then Martha, settling herself wearily in her chair, and shading her face with her hand from the light, bade the boy good night.

He left the room, but instead of going to his own little garret, he put on his cap and hurried off to see Lady Courtley. He did not mention this errand to Mrs. Wilson beforehand for fear of some opposition on her part.

He had not waited long in Mrs. Roberts' parlor before a soft rustle on the stairs told him of his friend's approach.

As she entered the room she held out her arms to him ; and he, looking into her face, saw that she knew the miserable story he had to relate. He dropped his head on her arm and burst into tears.

The lady gently drew him down beside her on the sofa, and stroked his brown hair without a word. Mrs. Courtley was not one of those people whose stroking makes you nervous.

It did the boy good to have a hearty cry in friendly arms ; for during all this sad business he had not shed a tear. Before Dorrie and her mother he had felt it his duty to keep up a cheerful face. What a relief it was to let loose his emotions, and, still sobbing at intervals, pour out the story in every pitiful detail, which had so long been hoarded in his breast !

Lady Courtley heard him through with hardly a word.

"You told me to come to you, ma'am," the boy concluded, "when I was in trouble. So I came. Do you think I ought to write to father?"

"What could he do?" asked the lady sadly.

"I don't know. It seems as if he could stop it somehow. And then, there's Dorrie."

"Well?"

"I can't do anything with her. Mrs. Wilson cries, you know, but Dorrie just sits in that window all day long, not crying a bit, but looking out with her big eyes. I bring in Terry and try to amuse her, but it's no use. Why, I haven't heard her laugh, seems to me, in weeks!"

Mrs. Courtley was at a loss what to do, John could plainly see. She had accomplished, however, the object which she had in view, of sending for her little friend. The visit already had done him good; he spoke in clearer and stronger tones, sat up straighter, and behaved more like a healthy boy of eleven, instead of the careworn, sober fellow he had grown during the past month.

"Tell me about your studies, John," said she. "How is the geography coming on?"

"Well, I can't do much in that, ma'am, without father. But I'm getting ahead a little. Dorrie and I study together when I can get her to.

Father showed us how before he went away. We pick out a good, shady place under the elm, and make countries and rivers and lakes in the ground. Dorrie generally marks them out with her cane. Then we get a pail of water and fill up the rivers, so that they run splendid, so long as I keep pouring."

"I should think you could make volcanoes."

"How?" asked John with interest.

"Why, I should take a little bit of crumpled newspaper, and cover it all up with dirt but the top. Then light it with a match — being very careful not to light Dorrie instead — and it would look just like " —

"Po-po-cat-a-petl," said John. "That was in to-day's lesson. I'll make one to-morrow."

Mrs. Courtley led him on to other subjects, and when, after a half-hour, she told him he must say good night and run home, he was surprised to find that he had forgotten all about Mr. Wilson and his troubles. Even when he remembered them, they did not weigh on him as they had ; and he was almost ashamed at not being able to feel more doleful.

"Be sure to come again soon and see me, John. Only come in the daytime if you can. I don't like to have you out at night."

John hesitated at the parlor door.

“You did n’t tell me whether I’d better write to father.”

“Write, by all means, and tell him about the whole matter. He’ll do you good if he does n’t Wilson,” she added, under her breath.

John trotted cheerfully down street, and turned in through the back alley. He was delighted to find that Mr. Wilson had reached home before him and sober, having been detained in a South End house, to which he had been called to make repairs.

John went to sleep with a lighter heart than he had known for many a night ; and in his dreams floated off to sea in a little boat over the bright waves, as he was wont to do in former days.

CHAPTER XI.

THE GLORIOUS FOURTH.

THE date of John's visit to his old boarding house was the second evening in July.

What was his joy, next morning, to receive a little note from Waldo Pettingill (could it have been instigated by Lady Courtley?) inviting him and Dorrie to accompany him to Boston Common on the following day and "see the sights."

Even Dorothy's eyes brightened at this prospect, for she had never visited that immemorial tenting-ground of the Fourth of July in Boston. John had been there once only, with his father.

It was arranged that Mr. Pettingill should call for them at eight o'clock in the morning. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson were courteously invited to join the party; but Martha had no heart for celebrations, and Thomas replied rather gruffly to John, the bearer of the invitation, that he worked hard enough reg'lar days; he wanted to rest on the Fourth.

It seemed as if the preceding day would never

pass. John occupied a portion of his time in writing a letter to his father, keeping back nothing of the misfortunes at home. After the letter was sealed and posted, he felt better.

The night before the Fourth was very hot, and, moreover, unusually explosive and horn-y.

At the appointed hour behold Mr. Pettingill approaching, in a stylish new suit of light material, matching his eyebrows. John and Dorrie were quite ready and, each taking a hand of the tall young man, the three passed out of the waste grounds into the heart of the city. A horse car carried them to the Park Street entrance of the Common, and soon their feet were pressing the sacred soil of that forty-acre lot.

They walked very slowly to accommodate Dorrie's halting steps.

"Let 's go 'n' sit down on one of the benches," remarked Waldo, with an eye to economy of purse as well as of strength. "We can stay here a while, and see everything that 's going on."

"And everybody that 's going on," he might have added; for, after all, it was the people that chiefly interested Dorrie. Most of us have become tolerably familiar with the outward appearance of our fellow-men. But to this shrinking,

isolated child no sight was more rare than her own race. They might have been from another planet, judging from the way she eyed them, especially the children, with wondering delight.

Even at that early hour the Common was crowded with men, women, and children, most of whom were evidently freshly set down from suburban trains. Here and there a brown-handed and freckled youth might be seen promenading the russet malls with a blushing girl in white or pink attire and blue sash, her equally brown hand resting upon his arm. Children were armed with red toy balloons, with which they playfully banged and greeted each other, after the manner of Gulliver's floating islanders. Old ladies sat upon the grass, surrounded by children and children's children, all drinking in the intoxicating compound of band music, snapping crackers, happy faces, and sweet, sunshiny air.

Waldo surveyed his charges with delight.

"Putty good show, now, is n't it?" he inquired genially.

"Oh, it's beautiful! Is every Fourth of July just like this, John?"

John, from his vast experience, nodded gravely.

"It looked just so before, Dorrie, when I came

with father. Only I guess the band played a little better."

"Oh, it could n't!" With which expression of faith and content she leaned back and drew a long breath of happiness.

It was a sultry day. The crowd increased constantly, surging to and fro, happily enough, or pausing to view some wonder new to their country eyes.

Perhaps the greatest activity was shown in the vicinity of the booths, which converted the principal malls into mimic and leveled Rialtos. In these booths a variety, not large, but imposing, of refreshments was advertised for sale. There was pink lemonade in huge Jumbo glasses; pink pop corn in recklessly lavish pyramids; and pink ice cream of indescribable coldness and flavor. One must fairly conclude that love for red color in all its shades is innate in the human race. Babylon and Nineveh were gorgeous in robes of this hue; the Athenians must have scarlet metopes below the Phidian sculptures of the Parthenon; Dante is enraptured in beholding Beatrice, for the first time, "in a most noble color, a modest and becoming crimson"; and, last of all, the New Englander calls imperatively for roseate ice cream.

"Let's have some," said Waldo, and, nothing loath, the children followed.

"Looks about as good here as anywhere," remarked their conductor, halting before a little pine table, which was sheltered by a huge elm, and bore, displayed upon it, several cloudy glasses and teaspoons. One of the glasses, however, was temptingly heaped with ice cream of brightest hue, while it received the moral support of a more staid and non-committal dish beside it, which contained the same compound, flavored with commonplace lemon.

The ice cream vender hastily washed three of the dim glasses and an equal number of pewter teaspoons for them, and beamed upon the trio, who thereupon seated themselves at the table, the two children glancing up at Waldo with an expectant air.

"What kind do you like best?" asked that young man.

"Strawberry," replied John promptly.

Dorrie hesitated, looked longingly at both samples, then whispered, "Do you suppose I could have a little of each?"

"One strawberry, one lemon, and one mixed," ordered Mr. Pettingill, with a consequential air.

How the pampered diner at Delmonico's would have envied those children, if he could have seen them tasting the first crumbly bits of ice cream!

"Taste good?" asked Waldo.

"Delicious!"

"Which kind goes best?" addressing epicurean Dorrie.

"Oh, I don't know! There is n't quite so much difference as I thought there'd be. But it all tastes like — like the Fourth of July."

Mr. Pettingill was satisfied.

While they sat there, making the cream last as long as possible, they noticed boys wandering about, all over the Common, selling white and colored handkerchiefs, balloons, whips, and other articles of a transient nature, and more or less popular.

Mr. Pettingill rushed madly into extravagance and bought a whip.

"It'll come in handy," said he, in half-apology, "if I should have a horse. Awful cheap, ain't it?"

John admired his purchase respectfully, while the girl's eyes wandered again to the fascinating human kaleidoscope around her.

They left the table at length, and drifted slowly

with the crowd eddying along the thronged malls and across the turfed corners, usually protected from encroaching feet, but now fast changing from soft green to a dusty brown under the irresistible flood of humanity that poured over it.

As they walked, their ears were constantly assailed with the cries of the various venders. One young fellow, with hat on the back of his saucy head, carried an open box of cigars under his arm, and was calling for customers to "try 'em before you buy 'em! Put 'em down again if you don't like 'em!" Here was a thoughtful-faced man, in the midst of all this shouting and banging, attentively examining a wee moth which clung to the twig he held in his hand. The Dime Museum, with pictures of rampant Zulus engaged in throwing clubs and poisoned darts, with the most cheerful expression imaginable, had established its tent at the busy Boylston and Tremont street corner. In still another corner was a minstrel show, with the saddest of men parading up and down before its gates, begging the lookers-on to enter this abode of dusky mirth. Directly opposite was the broad, cool tent of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, its cleanly walls and strong, cheery-faced managers preaching a

wholesome, though silent and unobtrusive, lesson throughout the day. Ice water stations had been established by the city at the several drinking fountains, and men were kept busy at them furnishing cups of cold water to every one who asked.

"I want to go down nearer the music," said Dorrie, after a while.

They managed to obtain good places, for people were very kind to the little lame girl, the serious-faced boy, and the slim young man, who, while regarding his own personal appearance as calculated to inspire awe in the most frivolous of wrongdoers, was in reality presenting a most mild and inoffensive aspect.

The band had stopped playing for a few minutes, but now it struck up again—a sort of medley, beginning with a light popular air which was just then whistled by all the boys of Boston, entitled, "Sally, come up."

Some of the children on the grass danced to the merry tune; and even Dorrie made little starts and jumps on her one foot.

The leader's baton pauses an instant, then falls in slower time, and a grand burst of solemn melody responds.

So closely are the commonplace and trivial akin to the sublime that the strong, swelling strains of "My country, 't is of thee," bring tears to the eyes of the listeners, for the hum of voices has grown strangely silent at that great hymn. To many a heart comes the memory of a few years ago, and with it the thought, how quickly this careless, good-natured crowd could be changed by a word, in the twinkling of an eye, to an army, undisciplined but stout-hearted, were that country in peril again! The hymn is no longer an empty sound, but, from the stirring notes of the first line to the solemn and sacred close, Americans feel it thrill to the depths of their hearts, and it becomes to each his own sublime utterance.

But before the tear can pass the quivering eyelid, the band has changed its mood, and, happily enough, the crowd follows, compressed lips relaxing into a smile when Yankee Doodle peals out merrily, and brings them back to the light-hearted, innocent gayety of the day.

It was high noon. The crowd had doubled in numbers since morning, and the grounds wore a much disheveled look, as indeed did the people. The trio of children (for we must count in Waldo)

did not, however, notice a single intoxicated person, and if there were some profanity, it was tired swearing, and did not seem half so wicked as many a phrase couched in most elegant English, from smiling but cruel lips. Pretty faces there were few; honest and kindly ones, many. The only woman's face that seemed vicious reproached them as they came upon it again a little later, and saw that she was patiently mending a toy balloon, in the hot sun, for a grieved child. Here and there were men stretched at full length on the turf asleep. There was something extremely pathetic in the utter abandon of their positions as they lay there, nestling to the bosom of perhaps the kindest mother they ever knew. Few men look bad when they are asleep — especially the backs of them. These poor fellows seemed like a lot of innocent, tired boys, though God knows what evil their waking moments may have known! It was a crowd very much like that of Galilee, I think, where "there was much grass."

The most crowded spots of all were the ice water fountains managed by the city. At each one of these were men, women, and children, jostling each other, not ill-naturedly, for the

white mugs. When the press became too great one of the attendants would go outside with a pitcher, and so help the people that were too weak or too weary to make their way to the counter.

In the Temperance tent addresses were being made in quick succession to as many people as could gain admittance. The sides of the tent were raised, and many loiterers stopped on the outskirts to catch a few sentences.

On Monument Hill, close by, was another tent, called the Police, or City, tent. There were one or two burly officers seated on benches within it, together with one disconsolate little fellow who had "lost his folks," and three of the blackest of diminutive pickaninnies, brought for a like reason. A swarthy mother soon appeared and swooped down on these last, while their brass-buttoned finder strolled away again to the distant quarter of the grounds where he had picked them up. This was the corner formed by Beacon and Charles streets, and, on following him thither, they found the whole section in possession of their colored friends. One could have shut his eyes and guessed his surroundings, such a murmuring of broad, soft voices filled the air. Among

the booths the throngs were still surging to and fro, and sandwiches—particularly those manufactured to order from a cut roll and a slice from a huge ham, with an appetizing smear of mustard—were evidently in high demand. All the tables, so scrupulously clean in the morning, now wore a crumby aspect, which betokened a lively custom and no time to clear up. A man who advertised “farm milk ” had all he could do to supply thirsty people at five cents a glass.

Meanwhile the clouds had been gathering on all sides, charged with fiery streams more potent than those of rocket and bomb, and the prospect of terrestrial fireworks diminished accordingly.

“Guess we’d better be going,” said Mr. Pettingill, looking up wisely at the sky.

“Oh, and we have so far to go ! ”

“Not so very far,” said Mr. Pettingill, with a chuckle. “Only to Mrs. Roberts’.”

“Why, that’s your house, sir ; but we have got to go home to ours.”

“See here,” said their friend, facing the two children, “Mis’ Courtley has sent a special invitation by me for you to dine with her at two o’clock.”

“But Mrs. Wilson ? ” began John, holding back his delight.

"She knows all about it. I jest kept it from you so 's to be a sort of surprise. Need n't come if you don't want to," he added, pulling a solemn face.

"Oh, it will be splendid!" cried John. "What a grand Fourth of July it is, anyway! Just think, Dorrie—the ice cream and the music and Lady Courtley all in one day!"

"I don't know," said Dorothy slowly, evidently having a struggle. "Perhaps I won't go, this time."

"Why, Dorrie, you've no idea how nice she is and what a cosy little room she has! Oh, do come!"

"I know," said Dorrie, all the light suddenly gone from her holiday face; "but, you see, there's father. He might be lonesome, and he'd miss me, perhaps" —

Mr. Pettingill looked distressed and puzzled. John began to think hard.

"I'll tell you," said he. "Just as soon as we get to the house I'll ask Lady Courtley if I may n't run down home and invite Mr. Wilson and aunt Martha" (he often called her that) "to come too. I'm sure she'll be willing."

"Like's not, like's not," exclaimed Waldo,

delighted at a prospect of a solution of the problem. "She wanted 'em to come anyway in the first place."

Dorrie's happiness returned, and the old, worried look, so strange in those sweet, young eyes of late, vanished once more.

"How good you all are to me!" she said gratefully. "It's the loveliest day I ever had. Just look at that big Newfoundland dog in the frog-pond, John!"

But Waldo, feeling on his shoulders for the nonce all the responsibility of a government weather observer, would not loiter by that famous sheet of water. His sagacious eye predicted "variable winds and local areas of rain," centering about Mrs. Roberts' boarding-house, whither he now hastened the steps of his two charges. The rain held off, however, until they were safe indoors. The new feature of the dinner was made known to their gentle hostess, who welcomed it as if it were not the occasion of the slightest inconvenience or additional expense to herself.

Away flew John, while Lady Courtley tried to amuse a very distracted little Dorothy until he should return. Mr. Pettingill, meanwhile, betook

himself to the mysteries of the toilet, emerging from his chamber erelong with the air of one who has largely altered his identity by a startling change of costume. As, however, he had merely changed a necktie with blue rings on a maroon ground for one with cherry semicolons on a blue ground, and had brushed back his hair in a manner to give it a moist and streaked appearance, he was still recognizable as Waldo Pettingill, *alias* Waldo Pettingill.

A sound of footsteps on the stairs. Dorrie's heart beat hard as she sat with her two friends in the little boarding house parlor.

"Come right in!" called John's cheery young voice.

"O father, how glad I am!" Dorrie's welcome was so unmistakably fervent that Thomas' face burnt a deeper red. But he took the little fluttering bird to him as was his old-time wont, and advanced to meet Lady Courtley.

"This is a very great pleasure!" she said, just warmly enough to put him at his ease. "I've been wanting to return your hospitality — my dear Mrs. Wilson, let me take your shawl! — but, you see, I am at a disadvantage as I have no house of my own."

"Mr. Wilson raced me two blocks," panted John, all aglow, "but I beat him a full length."

"Introduce me, please," barked Terry, vibrating forward like a kind of terrestrial pollywog.

Hands and paws having been shaken all round — "Come right up to my room," said Lady Courtney. "You've no idea how I've looked forward to seeing you. And Dorrie must tell us all about the crowds on the Common."

"Look, it's beginning to rain already!" cried John, running to her window as they entered, while Waldo looked as important as if he had conjured up the storm for the express purpose of making the indoor party the cosier.

Dinner would not be ready for about half an hour (that included time for Bridget to run out to the corner and purchase another box of strawberries and a few additions to the bill-of-fare); but nobody minded the waiting, especially as the approaching storm bore down every topic of conversation or thought.

The sky had rapidly grown dark, and the wind blew in short, spasmodic gusts, raising little clouds of dust, and dropping them as suddenly. People overtaken in the streets looked anxiously from the big round drops on the sidewalk to the

threatening blue-black canopy overhead, and hurried along at a faster pace, men buttoning their coats and girls drawing handkerchiefs over their heads. A low, melancholy roll of thunder swelled and died away.

"Are you afraid, dear?" asked Mrs. Courtley, drawing her little maiden-guest to her side.

"Not very, ma'am. I suppose I am a little."

"John does not seem to be." The boy was standing at the window, staring solemnly at the gathering tempest. "Are you, John?"

"Yes 'm."

John turned about and they could see that his face was pale.

"Why do you look at it, then?"

"I know I should n't be, ma'am. Father says I must n't be; and he don't mind it a bit. I suppose I get it from my mother."

"But you have n't told me why you stand and look at the storm."

"Why, I want to get over being afraid of it if I can, ma'am. Father says, as fast as I find anything I'm afraid of I want to look at it and go right up to it."

"But not into danger," interrupted the other.

"Not into danger. And if you think it's dan-

gerous by the window, I won't stay there, ma'am. I only meant I did n't want to run away, or just hide my head from it. I don't want to be scared of things. A man should n't be afraid of *anything*, my father says, except doing wrong."

As the boy spoke, a vivid flash of lightning glittered through the room. John started, and clutched the lady's hand with his own, which were cold. Before the crash of the thunder came he had recovered himself and stood "with soul erect," head thrown back a little, nostrils dilated, lips set firmly, and eyes wide open.

The picture of the little fellow standing there, mastering his fear and facing the storm because he knew that both it and himself were in the hollow of his Father's hand, was a far grander sight than pagan Ajax, noble as he was, defying the lightning.

There were but two or three heavy peals of thunder. The storm had passed over and was drifting northward along the coast, after the fashion of its kind in this locality. The rain, however, still fell in torrents. Luckily, Bridget had received her directions early enough to perform her errand and come scudding back while the storm was only a threat and a sprinkle.

She now appeared at the door, and announced to Lady Courtley in an audible whisper that "the berries was all right, mem;" but that she made bold to doubt if the cream would hold out, unless a compromise were effected by the addition of a little morning's milk to the jug containing that delicacy.

The hostess laughed the amused and unembarrassed laugh of a lady, and bade her serve cream and milk in separate pitchers; said compromise to be effected in public, if it should prove desirable.

While the maid was dispatched for the more substantial portions of the dinner, Mrs. Courtley took from a drawer in an old-fashioned stand a worn and mended but snow-white cloth, and spread it over the little center table from which a lamp and some books had been removed.

The aid of John and Dorrie was called into requisition to help set the table, and in due time arrived Bridget, whose services, it should be stated, had not only been voluntarily laid at Lady Courtley's feet, she being a favorite throughout the house, but had been gently stimulated by a small gift slipped into her hand the day before.

It was no lugubrious company that drew up to

the round table, Dorrie and John, with Mr. Pettingill between them, occupying the sofa, temporarily upholstered with cushions and a great pile of Transcripts, for Dorrie's benefit.

Mr. Wilson was for the time his old self, and came out bravely with his quaint Down East sayings and stories of army life, while his wife visibly grew young again.

John had his bright smile ready for all. Dorrie's face scarce dimmed the light of her happy little heart, but rather radiated it around the table. Lady Courtley presided as only Lady Courtley could, with ready hand for her guests' wants, and smile, word, or answering glance, as gay talk and laughter flew back and forth. Terry too was remembered, and from a remote corner of the apartment a subdued sound of crunching and lapping bespoke his contented repast.

As for Mr. Pettingill, he invariably laughed at everything that was said by everybody, even to excessive merriment when Dorrie innocently asked for bread, or Mrs. Wilson remarked that the storm was nearly over.

Late that afternoon four happy people bade their entertainers good-by, and with light hearts passed down the glistening, clean-washed, sunlit streets toward home.

CHAPTER XII.

THROUGH A KNOT HOLE.

WHEN John climbed the garret stairs in the old wing that night, he was well satisfied with the turn affairs had taken. Everything had gone off so naturally and pleasantly at Lady Courtley's, as in former days, that the wretchedness and fear of the preceding fortnight seemed more like a bad dream than reality. He of course had but small conception of what the appetite for liquor meant, or the leech-hold it has upon a man when once fastened. He only knew that when Thomas Wilson went over to the new place that he was fitting up in East Boston, he almost invariably came home smelling like those black-mouthed shops he often had to pass, down by the wharves, and was surly and ill-tempered to his wife and little daughter, and that the next forenoon he accomplished but little work at his bench. The boy was utterly at a loss to understand why a man, so much older and stronger than he, could

deliberately drink the liquor that took all the joy out of his home, and brought only sorrow.

Nor could Thomas himself have told him. One moment he seemed as strong as Gibraltar, in the horror of the poison and the resolve never to touch it again; the next, he felt himself literally falling toward the barroom, two miles away, and could no more stop himself than if he had slipped from the eaves of the lofty warehouses around him.

John undressed and jumped into bed, after saying his prayers, and cuddled down for a comfortable think — which was usually the boat in which he floated off to dreamland. He half wished now that he had not written to his father, troubling him about the matter; and as he looked forward his childish eyes could see no dark places. For children rarely discern the shadows of troubles to come. They carry their own little lamps of faith and a pure heart, throwing only light into the future.

The next morning John was both disappointed and relieved to receive a letter from his father, which must have crossed his own, stating that his work required him to leave his present stopping-place for a week or so; and, as he would be

moving about from place to place during that time, he had not thought it necessary to change his address, but had left word that any letter arriving for him should be kept in the post office till his return.

He would not receive John's letter then, nor know anything of his partner's ill conduct, for nearly a fortnight. John said nothing to his friends about the matter but set himself to wait patiently for Gilbert's return.

That forenoon he and Dorrie put Mrs. Courtley's volcano project into successful execution, culminating in a grand eruption with a fusee firecracker, which John had picked up on the Common the day before.

In the afternoon, his companion having gone up to her room for a nap, — for the celebration had been a great tax upon her strength, — he concluded to steal over to the shop and watch the progress of the work, of the full significance of which he was not aware. He found the new men hard at work and Mr. Wilson toiling with might and main.

They were all so used to seeing him about that they hardly paused long enough to nod at him as he made his way across the floor, between piles

of lumber, sashes, panels, and moldings, to his mousehole, into which he climbed nimbly and closed the door.

It was very comfortable in his little retreat; so much so that, lying at full length on his clean and sweet-smelling couch of shavings (he changed them every few days, as fast as they lost their first crispy freshness), he shut his eyes and presently was sound asleep.

When he awoke his first thought was that he was in his own bed at home, and, in his sleepy confusion of ideas, he was turning over for another nap when the odor of the pine shavings drifted into his consciousness. In an instant he was broad awake and observant.

With his ears, not with his eyes. It was pitch dark; not the faintest thread of light came from the outside, nor could he catch the sound of hammer, plane, or saw. He pushed the door back and looked down into the shop, or rather into that portion of space where he knew the shop was, for not an object could be discerned in the blank darkness. It was plain that the men had forgotten him, locked up the shop, and gone home.

He wondered a little that Mr. Wilson had not

come back for him, as it was now evening, and he had no doubt that some one would let him out before long. Very likely the Wilsons were having a quiet laugh about him at home, and Thomas would shortly appear at the shop door. Meanwhile it was not a bad place to stay in, even if one had to spend the night there. He had not the least idea what time it was, but he knew it must be after dark. Fortunately he had, boy-like, put one of Mrs. Wilson's doughnuts in his pocket before leaving home that afternoon, and this he now ate, refreshing himself afterward from a cold-water faucet in a little sink room to which he felt his way. He had some hope that a back door, through which the carpenters sometimes took in lumber, might have been left unfastened, but this too was locked and the key taken away.

John was not wholly at his ease in the dark shop; but he was much comforted by his doughnut, and sought his hiding place once more, to wait with the best grace he could muster for his liberation.

As his head came up on a level with the hole he was astonished to notice two or three points of light in the farthest end of it. He had no

idea what was beyond. In the daytime it was always dark on the other side of his inner bulkhead, and though he had once or twice caught the murmur of voices he never distinguished a word that was said. This was largely from the reason, I suspect, that he almost invariably crawled in feet first, and lay with his head toward his father's bench.

He was curious to see what was beyond, and, creeping softly in, laid his face up against a narrow crack and peered through.

What was his amazement to see his old enemy, Whelp, curled up asleep on a heap of clothes. A man sat beside him talking with somebody directly under John, and therefore invisible to him.

Just below the crack was a small knot, about half an inch in diameter. Upon being removed it would leave a hole pointing downward, exactly at Whelp's neighbor. A bit of light all around the knot showed that it was loose. John took hold of it, and wriggled it softly with his small finger tips. It was looser than he thought, and, provokingly enough, instead of remaining where it was, slid in a little — just far enough to be out of reach.

And the human mouse in the wall was more anxious than ever to hear what was said, for he was sure he had caught the name of Mr. Wilson, coupled with an oath and a coarse laugh on the part of the man beside Whelp. There was no longer any doubt that the speaker was Ralph Hurlburt. The other man was probably the proprietor of the junk store.

At last John became impatient, and resolved to run some risk, to ascertain what the two men were plotting about.

The only way to get rid of the knot was to push it through, like an obstinate cork in a bottle. How to do this without attracting the notice of dog or men, he did not know; but the difficulty was removed by the nearer of the two latter, who rose to hang something, John could not see what, upon the wall.

The moment he gained his feet the boy pushed in the knot. It fell rattling upon the floor, as if the man had knocked it down in leaving his chair.

Upon placing his eye at the knot hole, John was, however, dismayed to find that by one of the trio, at least, he was observed. Whelp had one of his eyes — and if ever a dog had a cold, brutal eye that dog was Whelp — fixed upon that very

knot hole, and was growling in a marked and highly significant manner.

"Rats, Whelp!" said his master, following his dog's fixed gaze, and looking unconsciously straight into John's eye.

"I say, Jagger, look at that setter o' mine! He sees game in that mousehole up there, eight feet from the floor!"

John did not dare to move or blink. He was cold with dread of discovery, and heartily wished he had let the knot alone. He stared at Hurlburt right in the eye with the fascination of a linnet before a serpent; but without that gentleman's remotest knowledge of the fact. Little he thought what kind of a rat lay watching him within reach of his hand!

Whelp, who seemed endowed with supernatural sagacity, bristled and snarled and glared at the knot hole until his master gave him a kick that sent him back howling to his bed, and made John's hatred for the ill-tempered creature suddenly turn to pity.

Resuming their seats, the two men went on with their interrupted conversation. John had seen, in his momentary glimpse of Jagger's face, that it was deeply pitted from the ravages of

smallpox, and was rimmed by a short, bristly, black beard. Ralph had no beard, but a huge, coarse mustache, usually indented by a large cigar, such as now glowed and fumed beneath it.

Jagger was the first to speak.

“What were you saying about my neighbor Wilson?”

“Saying? That he’s a fool. He used to mess with me in the ——th New Hampshire, and a jolly good fellow he was too. But now he’s grown sanctimonious. When I met him about three weeks ago he had hardly a word for that wicked man, his old friend Hurlburt. But I’ve fixed him, —— him!”

“Well, well, don’t mind him now. What’s the word from” —

Here the man dropped his voice, and while they talked in indistinct tones, John, breathing more easily, took the chance to survey the room in which they were sitting.

It was a small apartment, hardly more than a good-sized closet. The wooden ceiling was several inches lower than that of Mr. Wilson’s shop, so that it barely came above the knot hole. All around the sides was hung a most curious collection of objects — tools, such as John had never

seen before, odd-shaped bits, queer hammers, awls, chisels, all bearing a distant resemblance to those with which his father worked, but just enough unlike to puzzle him. In one of the walls was a sort of cupboard, of which the door stood partly open, a bunch of keys depending from the key-hole. There were three shelves within, and on them were one or two small tin boxes, and a number of bunches of papers, besides some other objects, which, being in the shadow, the boy could not make out. The room had some sort of a thick felt carpet, upon which the feet of the men, he noticed, made not the slightest noise. The walls were of a very dark wood, stained, and were not plain but roughly paneled. The only light was a candle, which sputtered feebly in an old tin candlestick, on a small table curiously at variance with its surroundings, its top being of some substance like marble, only green, and its slender legs shining like gold.

To the right, so far that John could barely see into it, was another cupboard, also open. This was more ordinary in appearance, and impressed him simply by its inappropriateness in that place.

It contained, so far as he could see, only glass and china.

At the left hand, behind the pile of clothes where Whelp lay, two framed oil paintings stood against the wall. These, too, interested the youthful looker-on but little, as they seemed old and dingy. The only other object of furniture — if it could be so called — in the stuffy little room was a common enough looking trunk.

While the man addressed as Jagger was speaking, he leaned over and raised the lid, disclosing, oddest of all, a heap of books. One of these he selected, and began showing it to his companion, who seemed, on the whole, rather bored. The book was bound in some grimy white substance, and printed with very large, queer-shaped black letters. Every few pages there was a small colored picture in brilliant tints, principally blue, red, and gold.

All this John saw as in a dream. He was chiefly interested, however, to hear what the man had to say about his friend Mr. Wilson, this being, in fact, the only part of their conversation which concerned him. If a man chose to keep his pretty table and old books in a room in his store, that was naught to John. If they were planning against Dorrie's father, that was another matter.

Rather to his disappointment they rose after

about five minutes' low, eager talk, and Jagger began locking the cupboards and trunk.

"You're sure Blanchard is safe, are you, if they answer the advertisement?" asked Hurlburt.

"Safe as death. The first two or three times he'll go without the book. If everything is clear he'll take it the third time."

"How about the table?" said Ralph, glancing toward it and yawning.

"Going to New York next Saturday. Walsh takes care of that. He's got a good man to run it in."

"How much?"

"Two hundred, sure. Is that saloon of yours about done, Hurlburt?"

"No; it's slowing up, on account of Wilson's being half the time on a drunk. I wish I'd let him alone till the job was done."

"A first-rate man for us," observed the first speaker, with a sly look. "Understands bolts and drawers, don't he? And has a good many calls to the houses up on the Avenue?"

Ralph shook his head doubtfully.

"If it wa'n't for that cursed Kent," said he, "we'd have him. He's the only man we need, now. That little girl of his won't live the year out, anyway, and then he'll be ready, if his pious

partner and that sneaking kid don't work against me."

While he was speaking Mr. Jagger was going through a series of performances which filled John with amazement. First he threw back one side of the carpet, which was indeed but a large mat, and upon his touching a certain nail-head in the wall a hole appeared in the floor. Into this he lowered the trunk, the table, and the two pictures, closed the trap, and then threw back the carpet. As he did so John heard two slight clicks, and looking up quickly found that both cupboards had disappeared. The panels looked exactly alike, and the room was only a most ordinary-looking closet without the slightest trace of door or treasures.

"Where's Wilson to-night?" asked Jagger, kicking out the last fold of the carpet.

"Putting in some of the inside moldings, over there. I'm going over now. It'll be ten o'clock before I get there, and by that time he'll be in a glorious shout at O'Callaghan's old stand, two doors off."

John's heart sank as the men, closely followed by the dog, walked out through a door he had not seen before, in the rear of the room, and left him in darkness.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT SEA.

THAT there was no use in waiting any longer for Mr. Wilson to come and set him free John realized when he saw the two men turn from him, one of them on his way to join the carpenter in a midnight revel. It seemed incredible that Thomas could again sink into the mire of intoxication, but John, alas, was learning fast, and it began to dawn dimly upon him that a drunken habit was not a mere mood to be taken up or put down at will, but an evil disease of both mind and body which must be fought not once or twice, but for months and years.

He had heard Wilson speak of the job that had taken him to East Boston that evening, and he knew it was a long and difficult one. Perhaps he could reach the saloon before the carpenter left it—before Hurlburt arrived! If he could only get out of the shop!

There was but one chance, short of pounding on the door and arousing passers-by, who would

break into the shop and make a scene and a newspaper item out of it. Besides, he was unwilling to let his neighbors know that he had been in the building while that secret talk had been going on.

Something about it was wrong, he was sure, and he wished the men to have no suspicion that they had been overheard.

The shop was a story-and-a-half structure, with a disused lumber loft in which John had not set foot for a long time. There was a trap in the ceiling of the main workroom, and the boy could vaguely remember in old times seeing boards taken up through a sort of window-door, into that loft. There was a bare possibility that it was left unlocked, or fastened on the inside in such a way as to be easily opened.

Climbing softly down from his mousehole, the slide of which he closed, and feeling his way across the floor, he soon found the ladder. Up this he mounted, unable to see his hands before his face, and guarding himself constantly against striking his head upon some projection.

The trap was closed, and no sort of a hinge or hasp indicated how it was to be attacked from below. By pressing in various spots, he at last felt it yield a little. His arms were not strong

enough to raise the heavy door, but he managed to get his shoulders up under it, and so, at considerable risk of falling off backward from the ladder, by bracing and lifting with all his might, he succeeded in squeezing through.

How hot and close the loft was! There was a great scampering and squeaking of rats as he rose into its dusty, stifling air.

Hardly pausing to rest a moment, but dreading lest his next step should be on the soft body of one of these invisible little evil sprites, he crept along to the old shutter. It was fastened, but only with a bolt, which slid rustily back at his touch. A good strong pull, and with an indignant creaking and showers of dust, the door swung open.

John leaned far out and breathed in the delicious night air with rapture. The stars looked down in friendly wise and he felt far safer in God's great room than in his own small one.

A dark object trotted up close beside his feet and, with a squeak like a young pig, bounded clumsily back into the shadows of the loft. The rats were growing bolder and resented the intrusion on their ancient domain.

John was still rather afraid of them and took a hasty observation before and behind.

The window of the loft in which he stood was fully twelve feet above the ground. He could "hang off" and drop; but a fall of six or seven feet into a dark alley, with no knowledge of the soil or pavement, was hardly to be risked.

Looking round he spied the end of a piece of joist sticking out of a pile of lumber. This he laid hold of and pulled out, causing much commotion among his unpleasant companions and clouds of dust about his head.

The joist was long and one end, he found, rested easily on the ground at a comfortable angle, while the other rose above the sill of the door, or window, to the height of his knee.

Escape was now easy. He pulled to the old, sagging door as far as he could and, hugging the joist, let himself slowly down to the bottom. He then laid the stick on the ground against the foundation of the building, and, breathing hard, but thankful to be at liberty once more, he hastened his steps out of the alley and into the street. The junk shop, he noticed as he passed, was closed, dark and silent. He could hardly believe, as he looked at its commonplace doors and shutters, that his whole experience in the shop and his strange vision through the knot hole

was not a dream. As to Thomas, however, he could easily find out whether or not he was at home.

He quickened his steps and pattered along the sidewalk at a lively pace, nearly running down, at the first corner, a policeman, who fortunately knew him and dismissed him with a friendly pat and an admonition to get to bed as fast as he could.

John ran on, turned into the alley, trotted up the familiar pathway, and slowed his pace to a walk as he neared the old house.

There was a light in the kitchen. Creeping softly up to the window he peeped in. Martha was sitting there alone, as he had expected. Her head was resting on her hand and on her face was a helpless look of anguish and despair that made the boy's heart ache.

He crept away as softly as he had come and sat down in the shadow of the great elm. What ought he to do? He tried to think what his father would wish, could he in some way understand and speak across the miles of mountain and valley and rolling stream that lay between. But it was of no use. He knew his father was about his work or resting quietly, with absolutely

no knowledge of his friend's sin and sorrow and his boy's anxiety. Love might pass to and fro between them, finding a conductor in the very earth itself; but beyond that only the thin air filled the eager grasp of the boy's doubtful heart.

Then it came to him, child though he was, that his Father in heaven who, of course, must be exactly like his other father, but able to see and understand always and everywhere instead of only when in sight, must know all about matters at the Wilson house and must be ready to tell him just what to do, as Gilbert Kent would, were he by his boy's side.

John knelt down and whispered a prayer, having in his mind all the time, I think, his very own earthly father.

"Dear Father, Mr. Wilson's gone off again, you know, and will get drunk. He's been real good for two days, and nice to Dorrie and aunt Martha and me, and now he'll be all wrong again. Please, what must I do? I'm afraid aunt Martha won't let me go if I ask her; and perhaps she isn't worrying very much about me, anyway, she's feeling so bad about Mr. Wilson. Don't you think I ought to try to find him and bring him home?"

John was so much in earnest to get an answer to his plain question, and so carried away with the idea of the presence of his Father, that he forgot to say "Amen"; which was, perhaps, just as well, considering that the word meant no more to him than "Selah."

He waited a minute, with his eyes shut tight, and the little *antennæ* of his soul all alert for an answer. (If my reader is shocked at the comparison, he must remember the Greek "*psyche*.")

Then he rose to his feet, as fully convinced as if he had heard the spoken word that his duty was to get over to East Boston somehow, and rescue his friend from the clutches of evil.

You may say that the boy was morbid; that he was excited by the lateness of the hour, the strange experience through which he had just passed, the lonely life which he had led with a crippled child and half a dozen people much his elders; and that he mistook his strained and unnatural sense of duty for the voice of inspiration.

I reply that John was as healthy a boy as I ever saw, rosy-cheeked, bright-eyed, and, on occasion, as brimful of happiness as a Newfoundland pup. And if God does not hear such a prayer as

John's, earnestly and sincerely offered ; or, hearing, does not answer in any way cognizable by the beseeching heart, be it child's or man's, then your God is not the God of whom I read in the New Testament ; whom the Nazarene figured on earth, when he walked the weary ways of Palestine, and took little children in his arms and blessed them. Your modern evangelist or popular preacher may be so driven with work, or occupied with lofty themes, or intent on saving souls, as to pay little heed to a lisping voice at his knee. I do not so read the daily life of the divine Man of Palestine ; I do not so picture the all-seeing and all-loving One, of whom Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." I can not draw any line at any given point between a child's prayers for a new doll, and a mother's prayers for the life of her child, or the preacher's for the life of a nation — saying, "Thus far, God heareth and answereth prayer ; beneath this degree of importance, he cannot stoop to reply." Nay, the answer to the child's prayer for the toy may awake in her own heart a love like that of the mother who bends over her ; the child for whom the mother prays may be, under God, the savior of his people.

When John Kent rose from his knees and quietly made his way down past the little garden, with its night-fragrant sweet peas, and white morning-glories with trembling lips half open, I believe it was in obedience to a direct command from his Father in heaven, the Ruler of the earth and the seas, the stars and the unseen universe, in answer to the whispered, frightened, uncertain prayer of this child.

Instead of returning to the street by the accustomed path, John instinctively took the direction of the water. He knew that ferryboats ran during the day across the harbor; and that probably they made trips in the evening,—or how could Mr. Wilson get back and forth? He had never crossed in a ferryboat, however, and had the vaguest possible ideas as to their whereabouts or the requirements for passage. He had, moreover, heard Thomas once say something about their only running once an hour (the man had probably been speaking of their night trips, or of detention by fog), and he was at a loss how to reach East Boston at all.

Along the lower side of the waste patch of ground in which the house was situated ran a high board fence. In all his life John had not

seen the other side of that fence. He only knew that a short distance beyond were the wharves and the water. In his dreams at night he always set out by climbing this fence; beyond, all was fanciful. He now resolved to take his dream-path and trust to his Father who was sending him to guide him to a means of passage to the desired haven. So, as boldly as the Israelites into the retiring waters of the Red Sea, he walked down toward the harbor.

The fence was a somewhat more important obstacle than he had ever found it in his dreams, and he had to try it at half a dozen points before he succeeded in scaling its smooth heights.

Sitting on the top to gain breath, he found he was looking down into a sort of neglected lane, or back street, which ran between his own land and the rear of a block of ancient sail lofts and warehouses, now silent and unilluminated by a single bright window.

At a short distance to the right, another street, even narrower than this, a mere alley, in fact, struck off at right angles toward the wharves.

He swung himself down on the outer side of the fence, hung by his hands, and dropped, landing in a small morass of mud, which had not

dried since the Fourth-of-July shower. The alley was soon reached. It stretched blackly down hill at a pretty sharp grade ; for the Wilson house, as I have said, was on high ground. It was necessary here to feel his way, and once he slipped and fell, bruising his knee. At the foot of the alley a drunken sailor caught sight of him and staggered toward him, swearing horribly. John did n't understand half he said, but knew he was in danger and ran like a squirrel.

He had not passed down the street a dozen rods when he reached the head of a wharf.

The water glittered here and there with stars and lapped against the slimy piers. John ran along the wharf, with no very definite idea, save to escape from the drunken man—who had already forgotten him—and to look for his dream-boat.

The wharf was encumbered with cordage, chains, bales, boxes, and piles of lumber. He found himself at last at the outermost end of it, with the broad harbor stretching out before him and the lights of East Boston twinkling out far away on the other side. Just beneath him, rising and falling on the ripples that stirred the surface of the water, was a boat ; not at all such a fairy

craft as he had often sailed away in, from his little garret bed ; but a dingy, ill-smelling affair, moored to the wharf by a rope and containing no silken sail. In the stern sat a man, apparently half asleep. As he heard the footsteps on the wharf above him, he lifted his head and looked up.

“Hullo!” said he, not ill-naturedly, “what do you want, youngster? Is the old man comin’?”

He meant the captain of his vessel, for whom he was waiting ; but of course John had no idea of this.

“I don’t know whom you mean by the ‘old man,’” said he, encouraged by the man’s tone, “but I want very much to go to East Boston. Perhaps you can tell me the way, sir?”

“H’m. D’ you know what time it is?”

“About half-past ten, I think.”

“What are you out so late for? Missed your way to the ferry?”

“No, sir,” said John. “Only there’s somebody over there I must see. He’s — he is n’t well.”

“Wal, if it’s only half-past ten, or thereabouts, I can put you over’n this ’ere boat fer a quarter. Got so much about yer?”

Yes, John had a silver coin of just that amount which his father had given him to spend, the day

he left. He produced it, and innocently held it up so the man could see it.

"Come on, then."

"Please, sir, how am I to get down?" asked John.

"By the stairs, of course. Don't you see 'em?"

They were just round the corner of the wharf. It was not pleasant going down those slippery steps into the darkness, nor stepping into the unsteady boat and crouching timidly in the stern as the man cast off the rope and took his place on one of the thwarts.

"You see," explained the latter, "I'm one of the crew of the barque North Star, — that's her, below thar, in the roads, — 'n the cap'n an' fust officer hev gone ashore, leavin' word fer me to be ready fer 'em with the gig. We sail to-night, at half-past eleven o'clock, soon 's the tide serves. I guess I can put you over an' be back in time."

John was much mystified by the sailor's allusions to the "roads" and the "gig," terms which he had associated with the dryest of land. He understood enough, however, to thank the man for his trouble.

"You must be very tired, sir, waiting there so long."

The man gave a short laugh, scornfully but not ill-naturedly, as he bent to his oars.

"I'm used to it, youngster," said he around the stem of a short, black pipe. "That's about all I've ever done."

"Oh, that's too bad! Have you any boys or girls of your own, sir?" pursued John.

"Never a one," the sailor answered huskily. "That's one of the things I've b'en waiting fer."

"Where do you live, please?"

"Down on the Cape." It was curious the way in which the rough sailor submitted to be questioned. Something in the boy's trustful manner, perhaps, touched him. "Down on the Cape whar' thar' 's a strip o' sand jest wide enough to keep the bay from blowin' through inter the Atlantic and makin' an island out of Provincetown. My wife says it's about the lonesomest place this side the North Pole," he added candidly, knocking the ashes from his pipe.

"And no boys or girls?"

"No, I tell ye!" said the man irritably.

He was sore on this subject, of this unfulfilled hope which had been the one fragile flower growing on the rough cliff of his heart. He had never

before acknowledged it to living soul, not even to his wife, so far as he had to John in that sentence just before.

"I'm sorry," said the boy simply. "I suppose if you want to very much, you will some time."

"Not in this world," said the man grimly, with an extra tug at the oars.

"No, perhaps not," said his passenger, who had been taught by Gilbert Kent that every gentle and loving wish, ungratified on earth, would meet its perfect fulfillment in heaven.

The man regarded John curiously in the dim light, but pulled away in silence; while the boy, left to his own thoughts again, gazed wonderingly out over the dark water.

Here and there vessels were lying at anchor, their black spars showing dimly against the night sky. Not far away from them a whole house, with lighted windows, seemed floating across the harbor in a course parallel with their own.

"That's the reg'lar East Boston ferryboat," exclaimed the sailor.

How different, how different, the boy kept thinking, from the voyage he had pictured to himself again and again. The boat, the clicking and splashing oars, the bubbling water, and the

man before him, were very real and very dingy in contrast to the bright creations of his brain.

Once the man pulled hard to get out of the way of a sharply puffing little steam tug, which had just towed a brig to her anchorage.

"Will you tell me your name, please?" asked John, as they neared the further shore. "Mine is John Kent."

"My name's Bill Dawson. 'Kent,' did you say? Any relation to Gilbert Kent?"

"Why, he's my father!" cried John joyfully. "Do you know him?"

"Know Gil Kent? Wal, I sh'd say I did! We went to the same deestricht school together. I want to know 'f you're his boy!"

"Oh, I wish he were here to thank you!" said John. "He's away now. We don't live far from the water" (naming the street in which the mouth of the alley counted for the number). "Do come and see us some time when the North Star is here."

"That's jest what I'll do," said the other. "Whar' be you goin' to-night, now?"

John told him, growing sober again.

"H'm! Pretty bad corner that. Wal, here's your quarter, so you can go back by the ferry, ef

y' want to. Don't ketch me takin' money from one of Gil Kent's young 'uns. Good-by. Tell yer father I remember him, an' 'll lay up alongside some time. I'm shipped fer a long voyage now."

"Good-by, Mr. Dawson! We shall look for you. Thank you very, very much for rowing me over, and for the quarter."

He felt genuinely sorry to leave his new friend; and the weight of his undertaking fell back upon him as he climbed the steps to the wharf above.

He inquired the way to the new saloon from several people, who looked at him queerly while they gave him the directions.

One said (it was a young woman): "You'd better turn right round, little feller, and run straight home. That place ain't fer the likes o' you."

"Thank you, ma'am," he said; "but I must go. I have a friend there who is not well."

His little speech sounded quaintly polite. He was so anxious to let it tell just the truth and nothing more.

The streets in which he now found himself were not dark like those through which he had passed

on the other side. They were lighted by the bright windows of liquor saloons on both sides of the way. A good many rough-looking men and women strolled or staggered along the sidewalk, but none of them spoke harshly to John, or, indeed, seemed to take any notice of him.

At length the corner came in sight where the new saloon was situated.

John's first glance took the eagerness from his steps, the light from his eyes. Even at that distance he could see that the saloon was closed and its windows dark. He was too late, then ; and at that moment Thomas Wilson was probably carousing with Whelp's ugly master in a neighboring dramshop.

CHAPTER XIV.

TO THE RESCUE.

AT a short distance from the dark blot on the street which marked the location of the new enterprise, now deserted for the night, a specially brilliant glare was thrown out across the pavement from a saloon more pretentious than the rest. John drew near, with lagging steps, and read on the sign over the door,

MICHAEL O'CALLAGHAN, WINES AND LIQUORS,
LICENSED.

A jargon of noisy merriment floated through the open door, from which its hot and baleful breath panted out into God's sweet night.

The boy timidly paused on the lower step — there were three from the sidewalk — and looked in. At first he saw no one he knew, not even Whelp. Then, through a cloud of smoke, he caught sight of the proprietor of the place, lounging against the bar and talking with a customer,

a young fellow, hardly more than a boy, with brown, wavy hair, not unlike John's own. He had his hand on a glass half full of liquor, and, from his loud talk and foolish gestures, it evidently was not his first. O'Callaghan himself had no tumbler, and was perfectly sober. He was a good deal of a temperance man, and took pride in the fact that he never drank at his own bar. "Of course," he would say, "if my customers want liquor I must give it to 'em, but I don't indulge myself; don't believe in that sort of thing, you know." Which position deprived him of even the poor excuse of his own appetite in pursuing his calling, and left him, in the eyes of honest men, ten times meaner than his half-drunken neighbors.

Still no Wilson. John advanced a step inside the doorway. Then he saw him — oh, pitiful sight! Could that be the father of pure and sweet little Dorothy, the man who, only forty-eight hours before, had been talking so courteously and sensibly at Lady Courtley's quiet tea party?

John shivered from head to foot and stood staring. Bad as he had seen his friend in his own home, he had never known him like this. They were sitting at the table, three of them,

Hurlburt, Wilson, and a stranger. Their half-emptied glasses steamed in their hands, and dripped on the filthy floor. The other two men still had their senses, for John could see that they watched their companion sharply, but Thomas had long ago ceased to be more than a brute, gifted with maudlin speech and laughter. He was sprawling back in his chair, with feet stretched wide apart, hat on the back of his head, collar gone, and vest thrown back, his face ashen pale, — for Thomas was one of those in whom intoxication reaches a white heat, — talking in thick tones and wagging his head to and fro like an idiot. Under the table lay Whelp, cowering as if ashamed of his company.

Hurlburt was the first to see John. He exchanged a quick glance with the third of the trio and made a motion as if he would have risen to check the advance of this little angel of light. But before he could gain his feet John stepped straight forward and laid his small hand on his friend's crumpled coat sleeve.

The carpenter looked up at him blankly for a moment.

"Won't you come home, please?" said John. "Dorrie wants to see you."

Whelp himself never had an uglier look in his eye than did Thomas Wilson that moment. John quailed before it, it was so strange, and fell back a step. Then he stood his ground, white and trembling, but stanch to his post.

The other occupants of the saloon looked up carelessly over their tumblers to see what the man would do.

"You — you — g' 'ome!" stammered Thomas, bringing out this last word with almost a scream. "Wha' d' y' mean b' com'n' ov' here, HEY?"

"Won't you come, sir?" said John, once more.

Wilson's only reply was to lurch forward and, seizing the boy by the shoulder, stagger with him toward the door.

"I'll go when — when — I want t' go!" hiccoughed the wretched man, dimly reading his degradation in the boy's clear eyes. The thought angered him.

"You g' 'ome!" he repeated, this time with a vicious push.

John was standing with his side to the door; had his back been to it the fall might have killed him. As it was he half fell, half tripped over the threshold and down the three steps to the sidewalk, striking his left shoulder and his head heavily against the curb.

Thomas lurched down after him, but was met by a powerful hand, which was laid upon his chest and thrust him violently back against the building.

"You've done mischief enough!" cried Bill Dawson's honest voice. "The lad's half killed now."

The sailor had had his misgivings as he watched the little figure disappear in the darkness after leaving him at the wharf; and making fast his boat, had run up to O'Callaghan's saloon just too late to save John from his fall.

He stooped over the boy and raised him tenderly in his tarry hands.

But Wilson was too far out of his senses to leave the matter here.

"No bus'ness yours!" he shouted. "Le' m' 'lone!"

Bill treated him to another push—he would not strike a drunken man—and turned again to the prostrate boy.

At this moment Hurlburt and two or three other rough fellows, whom he had summoned by a wink, came crowding out at the door.

"Clear out o' this!" shouted one of the men, grasping Bill roughly by the shoulder.

The sailor made a quick movement, his big right fist shot out, and down went the man like a log before a blow straight between the eyes. In the momentary rush backward, occasioned by this assault, Bill picked up John like a baby and glared at the fast collecting crowd over the unconscious form in his arms.

“Don’t one of you fellows lay hand on the boy!” he thundered, “or you’ll be sorry you ever run foul of Bill Dawson!”

No one replied, and the stout sailor started off on a dogtrot down the street.

The moment he turned the cowardly pack were in pursuit, espousing the cause of their comrade who had been struck down. Dawson had about a hundred yards the start of them, but they gained rapidly. If the boy had only been able to cling to the protecting shoulders it would have been far easier to escape; but his head, with the brown hair wet and matted, hung helplessly down, and Bill had to use both hands to hold him fast.

Reaching a cross street he turned into it, and then a second time into a dark alley a few feet further along. Here he flattened himself up in the shadow and waited for breath. Two thirds

of his pursuers passed the mouth of the alley in full cry; most of the remaining ones stopped at the corner, and seeing nothing of the fugitive, lounged back to the saloon.

Three men, keener of scent than the rest of the hounds, noticed the alleyway and came up cautiously. The first one peered in. It was Hurlburt.

The sailor had laid John down, and was sheltered by the deep doorway of a back yard. Hurlburt, dazed by the electric light at the street corner, advanced a step or two, looking cautiously about him. Something glistened in his right hand.

"Come on, Murphy!" he called to his comrades. "I believe the rats are in here. They must have — Ah, here" —

Before he could finish his sentence, or raise his hand, Bill was upon him. Both men went down, and the report of a pistol rang out, the shot burying itself harmlessly in the wooden fence. An instant later Bill rose, leaving Ralph unconscious. As he did so, the other two men came hurrying up. The first measured his length before a terrific left-hander from Bill, who had to take a pretty severe knock on the head himself; and the second, unable to stop, was received with another

sledge-hammer fist, even harder than that which had overturned his comrade.

Again Bill caught up John and ran, heading instinctively for the water.

A rush of feet told him that the shot had attracted attention ; but as night brawls were frequent in that locality, nobody seemed disposed to carry the matter further, or follow the stout sailor as he made his way rapidly down one street after another. As he reached the wharf, a shout from the rear proclaimed that the original gang of roughs who had started from the saloon had now discovered him. He hurried down the slippery steps, jumped into the boat, laid John down in the bottom, and with one sweep of his knife cut the painter. Then seizing an oar, he pushed off, just as the foremost of the pursuers caught the severed end of the rope, slipped on the slimy planking of the stairway, and fell with a splash into the water.

Bill wasted no time in words, but dropping the oars into the rowlocks, sent his boat foaming out into the harbor before the tipsy rough, pretty well sobered by his sudden bath, it is to be hoped, was fished out by his comrades.

As soon as he was fairly out of reach of any

missiles that might be sent after him, Dawson stopped rowing long enough to take off his jacket and throw it over the silent little figure lying in the bow of the boat ; then he kept on his course toward the city. His head ached from the blow he had received in the alley, but he chuckled to himself all the way across, as he thought of his rescue of the boy and final escape by a hair's breadth.

When he reached the end of the wharf, there was no one in sight. He was hoping there would be a chance to take John up to his house ; but before he could lift him from the bottom of the boat steps were heard approaching, and two men appeared at the head of the stairs.

"Lay up here — lively, boy !" called the foremost, in sharp, crisp tones.

Bill seized the rope and cast off, drawing the boat up alongside the piles of the wharf, so that the speaker, who was the first mate of the North Star, could easily step into the stern sheets. The captain followed and ordered, "Shove off ! Give way !" before Bill could explain a word about his evening's adventures. It was so dark that neither of his superiors had noticed the little heap, covered with Bill's jacket, in the forward part of

the boat. As they immediately began an earnest conversation about some matter of clearance that had bothered them that afternoon, he could only pull away in silence, rather dreading the moment when he should have to tell them of their unconscious passenger, and crave permission to take him home. The North Star lay a full two miles down the harbor, and it was probably only by a pretty active stretch of the imagination that Bill had pointed out her spars when he was carrying John over to East Boston an hour before.

The tide, however, was setting out strongly, and the boat swept along at a good rate, driven by the powerful pair of arms that held the oars. In the course of fifteen minutes they were under the bow of the barque, which towered above them, straining at her cable.

"Beg pardon, sir," said Bill, as he fended off with the boat hook and flung a coil of rope up to one of the crew who was waiting for them.

"Well, what is it, man?"

The wiry little mate was nearest, and had replied.

"I could n't help it, sir, but thar's a boy aboard."

"What, a stowaway? on the vessel?"

"No, sir. In this 'ere boat."

"What do you mean?" demanded the other officer, whose deep, bass tones were in marked contrast to the strident voice of his subordinate.

The boat was now at the companion way, and everything in readiness for the officers to go on board.

"Well, you see, cap'n, I — thar' was a little chap up by one of them grogshops on shore, and a big fellow about four times his size hove him out into the street. I took the little one's part, nat'rally, and picked him up to carry him home. About twenty men started after me, but I managed to give 'em the slip, and brought the boy along, too. An' thar' he is, not come to his senses yet."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" asked the mate, evidently moved by his sense of fair play to side with the boy, but amazed at the state of affairs.

"Why, I suppose, sir," said Bill, taking off his cap and scratching his head rather sheepishly, "the only thing to do is to take the boy home. He don't live fer up in the city. It's close by where you come aboard, sir."

"Nonsense!" spoke up the mellow tones of the captain. "We can't spare you, Dawson, with the

gig, to pull up two miles against the ebb and back again. We shall be under way in ten minutes. Bring the boy aboard."

Bill secretly rejoiced at the order which relieved him of all responsibility.

"He said his father was away," he reflected, "and he'd be wuss off with that big sneak that threw him down than he would here. I'll take good care of him, and send word to Gil Kent, the fu'st feller we speak."

While he was thus arranging matters to his liking, for he felt a strong attachment to the boy he had saved, the officers mounted the steps, which were pulled inboard after them, and stowed, Bill having followed with John in his arms, and laid him in his own berth in the forecastle.

The gig was quickly hoisted to the davits, hal-yards creaked through the blocks, sails slowly dropped from the yards, the capstan went round merrily to the tramp of the crew singing hoarsely at their work; up came the great anchor, dripping, to the cathead; the jib and staysails filled in the light breeze, the barque swung round majestically, and headed out to sea.

Past the pale granite bastions of Forts Warren and Independence, rippling through the smooth

water before the soft west wind, past the white shaft of the Outer Light, slowly round, till she headed east by south, now courtesying gracefully on the long swell that came sighing in from the broad ocean, the good barque North Star, with John Kent lying in a rough bunk beneath her deck, kept on her way, bound for the Cape Verde Islands and Cape Town.

CHAPTER XV.

THE NORTH STAR.

IT was a glorious summer morning. There was scarcely a cloud in the sky, save one here and there, which might have been in Wordsworth's mind when he wrote:—

I wandered, lonely as a cloud.

The sun shone brightly down upon the sparkling blue waves of the ocean and the white sails of the North Star, now five days out from Boston.

The wind was fair and she was swinging along at eight or nine knots an hour. The crew accordingly were in good spirits, and hummed and whistled at their work, which consisted mainly of light jobs, such as scraping and polishing the woodwork, putting a touch of paint here and there, splicing ropes, and the like. Once in a while, as the wind shifted a point or two, the boatswain's whistle would call the men to the braces, to brace or square the yards accordingly.

The captain was walking to and fro, in the

waist of the ship, now and then glancing up at the sails, or over the blue waters ahead.

All these were the common sights of ship-board life ; on the after deck, well up toward the weather rail, was a spectacle by no means so familiar to the crew of a merchantman at least.

Seated in a comfortable reclining chair, with her face heavily veiled and turned from the sun, was a lady, whose dark hair, escaping from its confinement and showing a thread or two of silver, announced that she was neither young nor old ; rather at the peaceful midsummer of life, when the petals of the wild rose still cling to the stalk, of even daintier hue than the blossoms of June ; and when the first golden-hearted asters, opening their starry surprises one by one, face serenely the coming autumn tide. The richness of the wraps which enveloped her, and the multiplicity of their folds, betokened at once wealth and illness.

By the lady's side, steadying herself with one small, gloved hand upon the rail, and with the other holding the scarcely larger hand of the invalid, stood a young girl looking off dreamily over the sea. She could not have been over fourteen, though her pretty figure, her dignified

and self-contained poise, as she adapted herself to the movements of the ship like a petrel upon the wave, and the rather haughty expression of the gray eyes under their dark lashes, added two or three years at least to her appearance.

“Edie,” said the older lady, speaking so faintly through her veil that the girl had to stoop to hear her, “won’t you take your book and sit down beside me, dear?”

“O mother, if you don’t care, I really don’t feel as if I could stretch out in a steamer chair such a morning as this. You won’t mind, will you, so long as I keep near you? I’d much rather be on my feet.”

“No, no, dear, I don’t mind. Only be careful not to fall. It seems to me the vessel tips more than usual to-day.”

“It reminds me of the old-fashioned ‘Boston dip,’ the way she goes up and down,” exclaimed Edith, merrily giving a little pirouette, to the imminent danger of her equilibrium. “O Captain Holmes, is n’t it lovely?”

“Well, rather — from my point of view,” said the captain gallantly, as he approached the ladies. “Mrs. Yarbrough,” he added in his deep tones, which were never softer or more mellow than

when addressing a woman, "I hope you're better this morning?"

"Thank you, captain, a little. I was waked pretty early by a sort of scraping and splashing right over my head."

"Mother was afraid the North Star had turned over in the night, and was rubbing against the bottom of the sea," put in Edith soberly.

"I wasn't able to get asleep afterward," concluded Mrs. Yarbrough, paying no further attention to her daughter's saucy interruption than by a little pat upon her hand, which still rested on her own.

"It was the holystoning," said the captain regretfully. "I'll see that it is done later in the day, hereafter. I'm afraid the men were singing at the same time."

"Well, a little," admitted the lady.

"Oh, fare ye well,
My bonny young gal!
Yoho! Roll the man down!"

sang Edith, imitating the uncouth chorus of the watch, one or two of whom, passing by, grinned as they recognized the performance.

"Captain," she broke out, suddenly interrupting

herself, "who is that, rolled up in blankets, away up by the — the forecastle? Is it a sick man, or what?"

She puckered her pretty forehead over the nautical term, and pronounced it with its full and unwonted complement of vowels and consonants.

"The fo'c'sle?" repeated the captain, following her glance. "Oh, that's Bill Dawson's baby, they call him."

"A baby? May I see it, mother? There is nothing the matter with it, is there — nothing catching, I mean?"

"Dawson, step here a minute," called the captain to a man who was passing.

The man came up, touching his cap.

"The ladies are inquiring for your baby. Tell them the story."

Bill ducked his head bashfully, as his superior walked off, and rehearsed his adventures once more, as he had a dozen times to the men before the mast — passing lightly over his own deeds of valor always.

"Do you say you know the boy's father?" inquired Mrs. Yarbrough, with interest, as the sailor concluded.

"I do, ma'am. Leastwise I did, twenty years ago. The boy's the very image of him, too."

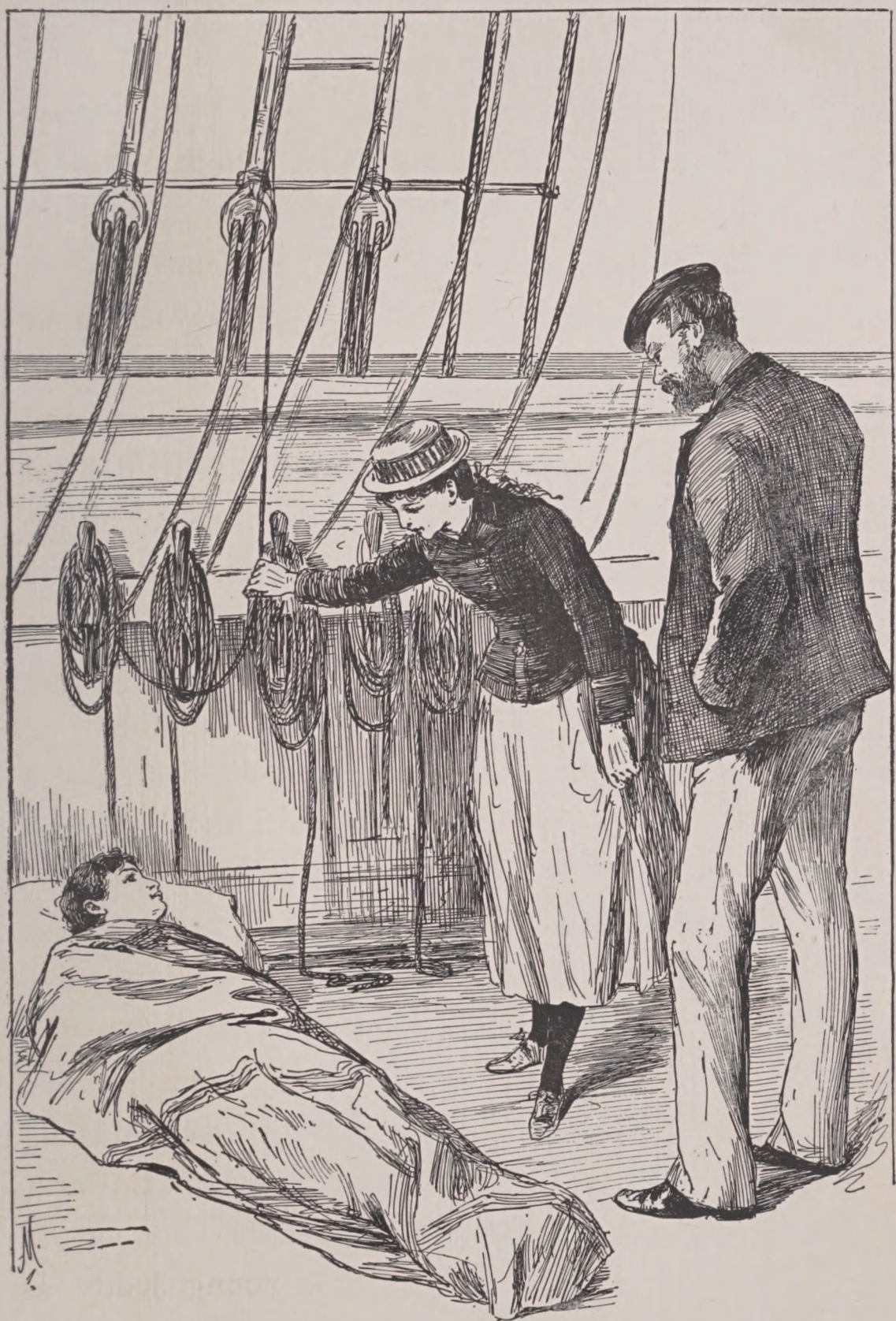
"How old is he?"

"Goin' on thirteen. He's a knowin' un, too, I'll tell ye. Why, ma'am, he'll talk by the hour about the Cape of Good Hope, as we're bound fer, and'll tell about ostriches, and Zulus, and other wild animals thar'abouts, as if he'd lived thar' fer forty year. I jest have to go off to keep him from talkin', 'cause it tires his head, you know."

"Mother," said Edith decisively, giving her hand a squeeze, "I'm going to call on the wonderful baby. I have n't outgrown dolls yet, and I always liked boy dolls best."

Dawson smiled quietly, but led the way to the place, rolling along, sailor fashion; while Miss Edith held herself from falling as the ship pitched, by daintily grasping ropes and pins in the bulwarks. The crew stared respectfully at her and curiously at Dawson, who, however, was thinking more of his convalescent charge than of the aristocratic young person behind him.

"John," said he, "here's a young leddy as wants to talk with you. She lives in Boston too when she's at home."



Miss Edith Yarbrough balanced herself birdwise, as before, and looked down curiously upon the boy at her feet. — Page 215.

Miss Edith Yarbrough balanced herself bird-wise, as before, and looked down curiously upon the boy at her feet.

She saw a pale face, sweet, but strong, turned up to hers, with a pair of keen brown eyes gazing straight into her own, as if he were reading her very soul.

In truth she felt a little embarrassed and hardly knew what to say. It would be ridiculous to address this child as a grown up young man ; and at the same time baby talk seemed decidedly out of place !

“ Won’t you sit down ? ” said John quietly, with one of his grave smiles. “ I ’d help you, but my shoulder is pretty bad still.”

“ I ’m awfully sorry,” said Edith, subsiding upon the deck beside him. “ Does it ache much ? ”

“ Well, some. But it’s nice to have you come and see me. I ’ve been wondering if you would.”

“ You have ? Why, when did you see me ? ”

“ Ever since the second day,” said John simply. “ I liked to look at you, because you reminded me of Dorrie.”

There was a moment’s quiver of the lips, but he turned it into a trembly little smile.

"Dorrie? Who's he?"

"It's *she*," said the boy, really smiling this time; "a girl that lived in the same house with me."

"Is she like me?"

"Oh, not a bit," said he eagerly.

Edith felt that the comparison was not complimentary to herself.

"She's lame — only one leg," continued John explicitly. "It was cut off, you know, after she was run over, and she has a crutch; but most of the time she hops."

"Was she any relation to that man who pushed you?"

John looked down and was silent.

"Oh, if you don't want to tell!"

"He's her father."

It was Edith's turn to be silent; whereupon John took up the position of interlocutor.

"Are you going all the way around the world with the North Star, Miss — won't you tell me your name, please?"

"I don't know — perhaps so; it depends on how mamma is. My name is Edith Yarbrough."

"Yarbrough!" John repeated it in a puzzled fashion, as if it brought back some dim memory to him; then gave it up with a laugh.

"Mine is John Kent," said he. "It will be jolly to have you on board all the voyage."

"What good will it do you if I am at one end of the ship and you at the other?"

John had not thought of this. It had not occurred to him that this young lady wore better clothes than he.

"Perhaps," he said after a moment's thought, "I shall be at your end of the ship. Captain Holmes told Bill that he thought I might make myself useful round the cabin. That's one reason why he let me go on the voyage. Only he didn't think how father would miss me—and Dorrie!"

"Dorrie again!" exclaimed Edith petulantly. "Can't you talk two minutes without coming back to her? Tell me about your father's shop and the funny old house the sailor said you lived in."

John began obediently and described his retreat in the wall, and the little garret room, and the cupola. Encouraged by the interest in her face, he kept on with an account of his recent day on the Common. Edith laughed uncontrollably at Mr. Pettingill, whose soft and lisping voice John imitated rather roguishly once or twice.

"I just wish he was on this ship!" she exclaimed between her bursts of merriment. "I should be laughing at him all day long."

"But he's real good," remarked John, fearing he had not been loyal to his friend, and sobering down. "Lady Courtley likes him ever so much."

"Lady Courtley? Who's she?" demanded the girl, pricking up her ears.

"Why, she lived with us in Mrs. Roberts' boarding house."

"Oh!"

There was something in the tone which hurt John; for he already liked his new shipmate enough to be pained by the discovery of any imperfection in her.

"She's lovely," he said gravely. "Everybody in the house loves her and calls her Lady. Of course she is not very rich, but she acts just as if she was."

Edith yawned and looked back toward the after deck.

"My mother will want me before long," she remarked carelessly, rising to her feet and moving off.

"Good-by," said John, grieved that she was going without a word to him.

“Good-by.”

She hesitated a moment, then turned, came back and deftly tucked in a corner of his blanket which had blown loose.

“Thank you for telling me stories,” she added graciously; “and I hope you’ll be better to-morrow. Perhaps I’ll come again to see you.”

And off she went with the dignity of a baby duchess.

John watched her admiringly and gratefully, till she rejoined the lady in the far-away reclining chair. She stood on tiptoe and waved her handkerchief to him; a salute which he returned feebly with his cap. Soon afterward Bill came forward, and finding his little protégé pale and tired, carried him below, blanket and all, to take a nap.

From that hour he recovered rapidly. The blow on the head had been a severe one, and he had not come to his senses till the vessel was past Cape Cod, and well started on her voyage. The doctor—for there was one on board—had worked patiently over him half of the night; while Bill Dawson, then and ever since, had played the part of an efficient nurse.

The men laughed at Bill when they saw the boy

in his bunk, but he soon became a favorite with them all, from the captain down.

There had been danger of brain fever. This was happily averted, and after the first few days of weakness he was able to walk about the decks, and even help a little now and then. He was extremely handy with the needle, and the men brought all their mending to him. He would sit for hours on a coil of rope, away up in the bows, sewing away as quietly as a woman, but with a wistful glance now and then toward the west.

Edith Yarbrough, he had found, was the only daughter of the largest owner of the *North Star*. Mr. Yarbrough himself could not leave his business, — he was in a large banking firm on State Street, — but his wife, though an invalid, was used to traveling alone, and had already tried two trips, with her daughter, to the Yosemite and to Florida, without essential benefit.

What she wanted, her physician said finally, was a sea voyage. Not a mere pleasure excursion of a few days, in a palatial Cunarder or Inman ship, across to Liverpool, but a real round-the-world trip, occupying several months, in a sailing vessel.

Her husband's inquiries resulted in his fitting

up an elegant little suite of staterooms on the barque *North Star*, which was shortly to sail for Africa, loaded with cotton cloth and agricultural tools.

A young physician, who had already acquired a remarkable reputation for skill in his profession, and who was a personal friend of the family, was induced to give up his practice and engage himself for the voyage. An ardent love for natural history, and the opportunities he would have for making collections, weighed strongly in the scale when Dr. Harold McAllister was deliberating the question a month before.

All these things John Kent learned by degrees, not only from Edith, who managed to find her way forward the very day following that of her first visit, but from McAllister himself, between whom and the boy a strong friendship had sprung up. The young doctor loved the human creature whom he had brought up out of the shadows of life—not of death, for death itself has no shadows; they are all on the life-side of the portal;—and John, looking up as he slowly rose from the muddy depths of fevered dreams, loved the strong, earnest face bending over him. He loved Bill Dawson too; but he could not help feeling toward

him as he would to a noble Newfoundland who had rescued him from drowning. Such affection as he at once yielded to McAllister was reserved for a fine and grand soul, like his father's and — perhaps — Dorrie's.

You may be sure, however, that he spent but little time in analyzing his sentiments toward any of those dear to him. These conclusions are rather my own, drawn from what I know of the boy and those about him at that period of his life.

When he first realized that he was hurrying away from his father, and that it would be months before he should see him or hear his voice, he felt that he should die of heartache and homesickness. His anger rose against Dawson, the captain, and the doctor, who all seemed members of a conspiracy to put these leagues of gray, trackless water between him and the dear old house on the hill. Then he thought bitterly of Thomas Wilson, the cause of his midnight journey, and wished it had been the drunken carpenter that had fallen upon the pavement instead of himself.

After an hour or two of such thoughts, McAllister would find him tossing in his bunk, with head throbbing hotly and feverish pulses leaping

in his veins. The strong, cool hand would rest upon the little burning fists angrily clenched under the blanket ; and the doctor would begin to tell him soothing stories of his own father's old home among the Scottish hills, followed by canto after canto of "The Lady of the Lake," every syllable of which he seemed to know by heart, until the boy forgot his troubles among the dewy heather of the Highlands, and the rushing of the salt waves past the vessel was lost in the sweet ripples of Loch Katrine upon its "silver strand."

Then gentler and better thoughts would come, and John would be in almost as much danger from over-excited repentance as from his previous anger.

He sometimes wondered why the doctor never spoke to him about God. That was very different from Gilbert Kent, who was accustomed to allude to his heavenly Father in his son's presence as naturally as if he were speaking of some one in the next room.

"I have been so angry," said John one night to Harold ; "do you believe God will forgive me ? I feel as if I had struck somebody."

A shadow passed over the doctor's brow.

"Oh, don't worry about such things now, my boy," he said. "Let's think of something cheerful."

Which to John was a strange reason for dismissing the subject. His happiest and gayest talks had been with his father over the old quarto Bible, or when they walked together in the fields near Boston on a Sunday afternoon. He was not at all satisfied with the young physician's answer and resolved to question him about it at the first opportunity.

CHAPTER XVI.

A SONG IN THE NIGHT.

WHAT do you suppose your father thinks has become of you, John?" asked Edith, as they sat talking a day or two later not far from the steersman.

John's position had become a rather anomalous one. He did chores and mending for the crew, was at the captain's service, slept in the forecastle, and spent a considerable time — by Edith's contrivance, I believe — with the cabin passengers. A silly boy would have been spoiled twice over by the favors bestowed upon him by high and low. It only made John the more eager to serve.

"I don't know," he replied to the girl's question, as he had to himself a hundred times during the past week. "I wish, oh, how I do wish there was some way to get word to him! If only Dorrie's chickens would tell her," looking up at the gulls floating above the barque.

"Why don't you write to them?"

John glanced up at her mocking, saucy face and smiled.

"No, really," she persisted. "Captain Holmes says we may meet a westward-bound vessel any time; and if we do, he has orders from papa to send letters home by her if she'll stop. I've got two or three written already."

John's face brightened visibly.

"I'll write to Dorrie this very day!" he exclaimed; "and to father, of course. Who do you write to?" he added innocently.

"Oh, to one of the girls at my school and a cousin in New York, and, if I have time, to grandmother."

"I haven't any grandmother; I wish I had. But I can write to Lady Courtley; she'll be real glad to hear from me, I know."

He had no paper; but Mrs. Yarbrough, having overheard this conversation, sent Edith down for her portfolio, rather to that young lady's displeasure, and bade John sit down then and there and write as much as he wanted.

So absorbed was he in his task that he did not observe, an hour later, the little flurry in the vessel when a sail was sighted ahead. Before long, however, he looked up and saw in the

expectant faces of those near him that something unusual was about to happen.

Springing to his feet he caught sight of a large vessel coming directly toward the North Star. He made a few eager inquiries of the doctor, who had joined the group on the after deck, and telling Dorrie and his father where to direct letters, hastily sealed and addressed his own to them. He had no time to write to Lady Courtley; for correspondence was still a new and by no means easy matter to him.

The stranger, on being signaled by mysterious little flags of various colors and shapes, proved to be the steam packet Ericson, from the Azores and Mediterranean ports to New Orleans. She slowed her engines while the North Star sent off a boat with the precious home letters, taking a bundle in return for friends in the East. The boat came back, rising and falling on the waves; the North Star dipped her colors, the Ericson responded with three gruff blasts from her whistle, and the vessels separated, hurrying farther and farther apart, until each was to the other but a mere bird's wing on the horizon.

John felt a little comforted to know that he had actually sent a message back over the sea

to those who might that very hour be mourning for him.

The next day was Sunday. Promptly at six bells — eleven o'clock — the captain had the crew called to the main cabin for prayers and himself read the Episcopal service. Now John had never before heard it, and the set prayers and responses astonished him a good deal. However, by the aid of Mrs. Yarbrough, a devout Episcopalian, on one side, and Bill Dawson on the other, he managed very well with his part. To be sure he was rather disturbed between his two friends' different responses, the lady following the Prayer-book implicitly, and Dawson devoutly growling "Good Lord, deliver us!" on every occasion that offered; but the boy was really much impressed with the beauty and solemnity of the service, and felt more at home on board the *North Star* than he had at all up to that time.

After church was over, he joined the doctor, up in the bows of the vessel, and assailed him at once with questions about the Prayer-book. Who made it? Was it like the Bible? Did the minister always read the same prayers? Why did everybody hurry so fast in the Psalms? And so on.

McAllister gave him laughing replies and tried

to change the subject ; but the boy was full of this one thought and could not be diverted from the (unconscious) attack.

“Did God write it?—the Prayer-book, I mean, Dr. McAllister?”

The doctor fidgeted.

“I’m sure I don’t know, John. Nobody knows about such things.”

“Why, there’s the Bible,” cried John. “Now of course everything in that is true” —

He paused for an answering nod ; but to his dismay none came. Harold merely flushed a little and gazed off over the water. He was too honest and too kind a gentleman to wish to disturb his little friend’s faith, whatever his own belief or unbelief might be.

“Why, Doctor McAllister, you don’t mean?—you don’t” —

He could not put it into words. Harold came to his rescue.

“I only mean, John, that I *know* nothing about it. I very earnestly hope that it’s all true ; that God is alive ; that Jesus rose from the dead, and that the Bible is his Word.”

“That God is alive ! Why, doctor, you believe my father is alive, don’t you ?”

"Certainly," said Harold, with an indulgent smile and a mental wave of his weaver's beam at this young David's approach with his sling.

"But you can't see him nor hear him."

"No; but you have, and I see you."

"Ah," said John, his quick wits catching at the flaw in his older friend's reasoning, "but it won't do just to believe the things we see and hear, Doctor McAllister. Father says there's fire in the middle of the earth, and that once the mountains and the rocks were all hot and melted. Don't you believe that?"

"Y-e-e-s," said the doctor, stepping a little more carefully than he had.

"Well, sir, you never saw nor heard that fire."

"No, my boy, but I've seen the effects of it — the cooled rocks, the queer formations of hills, the coal fields and the green forests that have been watered by the rain that rose from the hot earth and fell again. I've seen effects that can't be explained in any other way, but are explained very easily by the fire theory."

He was using pretty long words, but John followed him, and answered in a moment:—

"Father says, Look at the first good man or

woman you see, and watch them doing good, and working and dying for other folks, and being very happy about it all the time. And think how good people have always done this in the world. Then, says father, you can see that it's God who makes them so. And it seems to me, doctor, that it's easier to explain it that way than any other."

The doctor was silent. It is possible that the matter had never been put to him in just that light before. The sparkling, eager face before him was a strong argument for the existence of a great Power somewhere in the universe which could conceive and inspire the soul that looked out through those young eyes.

"That was well spoken, John," he said gravely. "Let me think it over a bit. I wish I knew your father!"

He turned and walked slowly away, leaving John in a tremble of delight at his last words.

In the evening somebody — could it have been McAllister? — started a hymn: —

" Out on an ocean all boundless we ride,
We're homeward bound,
Homeward bound!"

The doctor's voice was a sweet tenor, the captain's came in strong on the bass, and Edith and

her mother sang the air, while the others joined in as best they could. The watch gathered in the waist of the ship and listened with caps off.

“ We ’re homeward bound,
Homeward bound.”

The rich melody rang out, while the stars looked down on the little vessel floating in its world of waters ; and the waves of the tropical sea rolled away from the bows, and in the wavering, tossing wake, in gleaming masses of phosphorescent light.

After the first verse, one voice dropped out — the boyish treble. John could not bear the words yet. It was McAllister’s arm that went round him in the darkness.

“ You can sing it, my boy, if I can,” he whispered. “ It ’s a long voyage, but it ’s toward home, you know.”

John did not give the words any graver import in his mind than the speaker meant. He took them in their simple, literal meaning, and seeing in imagination the North Star speeding on its way around its long orbit toward dear old Boston, he was comforted.

And so — God bless us every one ! — may we be.

What matter how long the journey, how rough and dreary the road? Home lies at the end of it.

John and Harold sang the closing verse with a will. Then they all separated for the night, and falling asleep, began to dream the dreams God sent them; and all the while the faithful North Star bore them onward, ever onward, over the dark waves, homeward bound.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CATHEDRAL.

IN due season the North Star came to anchor off Porto Praya, the chief town of Santiago, largest of the Cape Verde Islands. A part of her cargo was discharged here, and she took in supplies of fresh fruit and water. As all this occupied the best part of a week, there was ample opportunity for the passengers to go ashore and make little excursions inland.

Through the kindness of the Portuguese governor-general and his family, ponies were placed at the service of Mrs. Yarbrough and her friends, including, besides Edith, McAllister and John.

The boy was full of delight and wonder at the strange scenery and vegetation of the island. The houses of the town were for the most part mean and squalid, but once outside its limits, there were grand mountains, streams leaping down through rugged ravines, groves of cocoanut palms, and

plantations of coffee, rice, and sugar. On the higher portion of the island there were no trees, but the labor of climbing the heights was more than repaid by the view of the rest of the group, the nearest of which was distant only seven miles. Against the western horizon a puff of vapor hung over the volcano of Fuego, thirty miles away.

Mrs. Yarbrough's health improved so rapidly that the captain decided, at her request, and in accordance with the plans and directions laid down by the wealthy banker, to whom the disposal of the cargo was a secondary affair, to delay sailing for a few more days.

The air was soft and delicious, its heat tempered by the sea breezes. The rainy season was not far away, however, and it was highly desirable to reach Cape Town before it set in.

One afternoon the party of four had been paying a visit to the west coast of the island, not only to view its picturesque cliffs and plateaux, but to avoid the force of a disagreeable, dry east wind which that day blew straight off from the desert of Sahara. This hot wind, which, the captain told them, was called the Harmattan, is much dreaded and detested by the inhabitants of Santiago. Indeed, our friends were peculiarly fortunate, said

the governor, in experiencing such pleasant and wholesome weather. During many months of the year alternate storms and droughts are prevalent, and the people suffer terribly from fever and famine.

Mrs. Yarbrough and the doctor were riding on ahead, with a native guide beside the ponies. The excursion was over, and the party were making their way toward home.

Edith's pony was a lazy little fellow and a hungry one, too ; for he continually thrust his head down, despite his rider's pulling at the reins, to nibble at various leaves and stalks by the roadside which he deemed appetizing.

"What a stupid beast !" she exclaimed petulantly, as she twitched his head up for the twentieth time.

"Not stupid," laughed John ; "only hungry."

"Well, he's made us lose sight of mamma anyway."

"Let's hurry," said John, who had preferred to walk, and who now seized the pony's bridle to lead him forward.

"Don't, please !"

"Don't what ?"

"Hurry so."

“Why, you said” —

“Oh, don’t be tiresome! I said the rest were out of sight, that’s all. Now I can do as I please.”

John obediently dropped the bridle, and the pony finished the bite which he had half made.

“Let’s do something jolly, all by ourselves,” continued the girl, her gray eyes sparkling. “Come on, John, I’m going up this path.”

“But your mother?”

“Oh, she won’t mind. She’s used to me. Besides, Dr. Mac will be after us in a jiffy. You can stay if you’re afraid,” she added, pulling the pony’s head round to the left. “Good-by.”

John’s answer was to spring to her side.

The path they had chosen at hazard led up the brink of a deep ravine. The islands being now almost treeless on the high central lands, whatever rain falls either evaporates immediately, from the hot, bare soil, or rushes off in roaring torrents of an hour’s duration. These impetuous freshets have torn out ravines, in some cases so large that their sheltered slopes afford farm land, and bountiful crops of coffee, sweet potato, sugar-cane, and other products are raised there.

There was a deep inlet, like a miniature fjord, at the extremity of the gulch along which the

young folks now took their way, their older companions being on a parallel path, a mile or two further inland.

As they neared the end of the ravine, Edith cried out with delight.

"O John! John Kent, just look at this tiny little town! Aren't the houses cunning?"

"Manuel told us about it this morning," said John, eying the cluster of small stone houses with interest. "The governor used to live here, in old times." Then, more soberly: "We must be a good way off our path, Miss Edith."

"Oh, never mind! they'll find us. I must see this village—or what's left of it. I feel like the princess in a fairy tale, grown little and walking about in a wee bit of a toy village. The palms look like those little wooden trees—don't you know?—painted green, and fastened in flat, yellow button-molds."

By this time they had reached the main street of the town, which was indeed but the continuation of their mountain trail. One or two beggars importuned them, in harsh Portuguese, for alms, but for the most part the place seemed asleep and dreaming of its past, if not in reality dead.

A few of the houses were pleasant-looking

enough, and in some of the shop windows there was a tasteful display of bright-colored goods. Nearly everywhere, however, was squalor and dirt, in the midst of which even the pony seemed to pick up his hoofs disdainfully. The English-speaking boy and girl did not attract much attention, as there were two or three coaling stations for British steamers at the Cape Verde Islands, and tourists were at this time a by no means uncommon sight. They advanced slowly along the street, and up a rather steep hill toward a large stone building, partially in ruins.

"Miss Edith," said John, as they paused, he and the pony, for breath, "I'm afraid there's a storm coming up. Don't you think we ought to go back now?"

"Go, if you want to. I'm going to see this old ruin ahead."

John shook his head doubtfully, but started on again with her, as she urged her small steed uphill. The houses thereabouts were dilapidated and forsaken. Not a human being was in sight. They could hear the sound, faintly, of a mountain stream, leaping down over its black basaltic rocks, in the ravine. As they toiled upward, John suddenly thought of his dream, — now seeming so

long ago, — and could not help imagining his little lame companion halting and fluttering painfully on the further side, in the rough grasp of the “ugly dog-man.” He felt as if Dorrie were calling to him, “Come over! Come over!” From the reality of his vision he was recalled to the unreality of his present environment and to his little lady charge, by her petulant voice.

“What are you dreaming about, now, John? Your eyes are as big as saucers, staring over at that hill. Don’t you see it’s raining?”

A big drop came down, spat! on the boy’s face as he turned it up to the sky.

“What did you take me here for?” added Edith. “Mother will be awfully worried.”

He could not tell whether she was in earnest or joking. But there was no time for remorseful reflection or for meditation. A huge, black cloud was rising rapidly over the northern sky, which had for some time been hidden by the slope of the mountain. Thus far, there was not a glimmer of lightning or growl of thunder. Against the massy blue-black of the cloud, terrible in its silent march, rose the pale broken walls of the ruined building, now only a short distance above them.

“We must get under shelter,” said John,

hurriedly, seizing the bridle and leading the reluctant pony up a little side path worn by generations of feet in the solid rock.

"But I want to go back!" cried Edith.

"We have n't time."

"I *will* go back to mamma! I don't want to stay in that horrid old place. There's no roof to it, anyway, and I shall get wet through!"

She gave a strong pull at the bits, which made the little beast beneath her rear and nearly overturn her squire.

"Give me the reins," said John quietly.

"I sha'n't!" And then, dropping them suddenly, she put her hands to her face and began to cry, half from anger and half from genuine fear. For the cloud had now nearly overspread the sky, and the bare, stony hillside, with its gray ruin standing up desolate in the gathering darkness, was ghastly. The rain as yet fell no faster; only a drop at a time, great, wet splashes, making their deliberate black blots upon the rocks beside the path.

John drew the bridle reins over the pony's head, and grasping them close to the bits urged him on, while Edith, with white face, clung to the pommel, her eyes shut tight to avoid the first flash of lightning.

Suddenly the motion of the active little back beneath her became easier. The small iron hoofs rung on a smooth surface of stone, then stopped altogether.

"Please get down," said John's voice.

She chose to be offended at his assumption of authority, and would not even deign to open her eyes, much less to dismount.

A quick step came to her side, and she felt herself lifted from her saddle and gently placed upon her feet. John was a sturdy fellow, and though his lame shoulder gave him a twinge, it was an easy matter for him to carry out his disregarded request.

"John Kent," began the girl angrily, opening her eyes wide now, and stamping her little feet on the stone pavement, "what do you" —

But at this point the blaze of those two gray stars, under their black clouds of lashes and knit brows, was utterly extinguished by a broad glare of light — it was more like literal flame — that seemed to devour the whole building and the solid earth, in its cold, dazzling flood. Then came such a rolling, stifling roar of thunder as is rarely heard outside the tropics. The walls of the building seemed crashing down about the heads of the two

who stood there cowering under the suddenness and overwhelming uproar of the attack. As it died away, a sound of rapid hoof-beats fell on their ears. The pony, frightened by the lightning, had seized the opportunity to make his escape.

There was a silence, terrible, because it was but the vacancy into which that awful Niagara of thunder would shortly pour again. It was so dark that Edith, uncovering her eyes for an instant, could just distinguish the walls around her. She put her hands up again instantly, and stood trembling from head to foot.

John felt his horror of the storm growing upon him, and knew, if he did not conquer it by immediate action, he should cry out in the wildness of his fear. There was hardly a living creature in God's world of which he was afraid; but the inherited dread of the mighty enginery of the tempest drove the blood to his heart and clutched at the very springs of life with mortal terror.

"Come, Edith!" he gasped, taking her hand, "we must n't stay here."

The rain-spots on the floor reminded him of their exposed position. The girl, still shuddering with dread, refused to go.

“ You must ! ”

John was barely thirteen, but there was already that in his voice which called for obedience.

She yielded, suffering him to lead her by one hand, while she covered her eyes with the other.

“ Where are we ? ” she murmured.

“ In an old church, I guess. A cathedral, they call it, don't they ? ”

Her reply was cut short by another blinding flash and almost simultaneous thunder peal.

He hurried across the floor of what had once been the transept, now open to all the destroying elements. Jagged gaps alone showed where the windows, with their humble traceries and crude imagery, had once told, in hues of purple and gold, as the peaceful sunset light shone upon and through them, the old, old story. The walls were still standing, to about half their original height. The entire roof had long since fallen in ; and at the broken altars the storm held high mass, regardless of season and pope.

At the further side of the transept, just beyond the corner formed by the in-curve of the apse, was a small oak door, with deep sunken panels and huge, curiously wrought hinges. A slab of stone, probably once cut from a grave, leaned across the

jambs. It must have been only the extremity of superstitious awe, for which the inhabitants of these islands are noted, that had prevented the further pillage and destruction of the old cathedral.

John reached in over the stone and pushed at the door. It was locked, but the dry and decayed wood in which the hinges were fastened yielded slightly. Encouraged by this and urged by the rain, which now began to pour down in good earnest, he assaulted the ancient portal again.

"You push, too!" he bade Edith. And she added a few pounds to the pressure.

Presently the door creaked and fell in with a crash, carrying a good-sized piece of the post with it, as well as John himself, who was putting out his whole strength.

Picking himself up quickly, he helped his companion in over the obstructing slab.

The place in which they found themselves seemed to be rather a passageway than a room. It was very close, and dark as midnight, but a glimmer of light came from some inner recess beyond.

Picking their way carefully through the dust of half a century, they advanced, step by step, along the passage, towards the faintly lighted room.

A peal of thunder rolled over their heads, but it seemed faint and far away.

From behind came a powerful draught, raising the dust in clouds and extinguishing a match which John lighted in a vain attempt to acquaint himself with the exact nature of his surroundings.

"Wait a bit, Miss Edith," said he cheerily. "I must shut the front door, and then we'll be as snug as can be."

She made a little nervous clutch at his sleeve, hating to be left alone; but he was gone. After what seemed to her an age of solitude, her boy guardian returned, groping his way to her side.

"It took some time," he said breathlessly, "to make the old door stand up, the wind blew in so. And it lightened once—you'd better be glad you're in here! Now let's see what's in beyond."

CHAPTER XVIII.

MR. PETTINGILL'S GOOD NEWS.

WHEN Thomas Wilson awoke, on the morning after his midnight carouse at O'Callaghan's, it was with a sense, not only of physical pain, which alone is a small matter to a child of the Eternal; but with that which is an exceedingly serious matter, a vague consciousness of having done something shameful. As this grew into acute certainty, the man tried miserably to lose himself again in dreams, clutching at the robes of departing Sleep.

But she would not stay. Her mission, more brief than that of blessed Death, was over, and she gave place to her keen-eyed, unrelenting sister of the day, by whose side stood a dim form, the most lovely, the most august, the most awful of the three — Conscience.

The carpenter, who had debased the calling of the Carpenter of Nazareth, groaned and buried his head in the hot pillow, striving to shut out her face.

A hand was laid on his shoulder.

"*Thomas Wilson, where is my boy?*"

The words came dropping down clear and cold, into the torment of the wretched man's burning remorse.

"Before God, Gilbert, I don't know!"

He ventured to look up at the face of the father, and was startled, even in his own misery, at its drawn pallor.

"You saw him last night?"

Thomas tried to recollect, pressing his hands against his throbbing forehead. At length there came a vision of a pair of brown eyes looking pure lightnings into his, a boyish figure standing beside him — then — then — did he strike the boy? No, he *could* not have done that! Yet there was the picture — the little crumpled, silent heap on the sidewalk, and bending over him the man — ah, yes, a broad-shouldered, tall man who seemed to be taking the boy's part — beyond that all was blank.

He told Gilbert, brokenly, all he knew; then hid his face again, and cried, with sobs that shook the bed:—

"I *did n't* strike him, Kent; I know I did n't," he groaned. "I wanted to pick him up, but they would n't let me."

When he uncovered his face he was alone — with Conscience, a consuming fire — God.

Nobody knew what had become of John. His father visited every police station in the city, and blue-coated men were on the lookout night and day for weeks after the date of the boy's disappearance. Hurlburt, it was long afterward discovered, induced, by bribes and threats, every man who was sober enough to have taken part in that chase through the city streets at midnight, to hold his peace. Indeed, only two or three had actually seen Dawson push off, with his senseless burden, and pull out into the harbor. In reality no one had the remotest glimmering of an idea of the boy's whereabouts.

Gilbert had in some way received John's letter. He had delayed leaving his first location, on account of the holiday, and so had obtained his information as to Wilson's conduct in his absence.

He had at once left town by the night train, and on reaching home in the early morning had found Martha, with eyes red from sleeplessness and weeping, beginning her weary day's work.

A kind word and a pitying grasp of the hand were all he could give her. He hurried to his own end of the house, only to discover that John's bed had not been slept in the previous night.

Martha, who had been far too much occupied with her own great grief, since helping her drunken husband upstairs at two o'clock, to think of the boy, could give him no information, except that John had gone to the shop the afternoon before.

With a terrible suspicion crossing his mind, Kent hurried up to Wilson's room, and there had spoken the six words which fell upon the man's waking senses.

Hurlburt, of course, was closely questioned, but declared he had hardly noticed the boy. Indeed, he had not known it was John at all, and did n't half believe it now. O'Callaghan had n't seen any such boy in the saloon. Wilson had got into a row with somebody outside the door, and "he [O'Callaghan] had sent his bartender to get him inside again, and so had kept him out of the station house and municipal court." This in an injured and aggrieved tone.

Both men were privately examined by the authorities, and discharged for want of any evidence against them. There was nobody but Wilson himself to swear even to the identity of the boy.

Among other clews, you may be sure that Kent

hurriedly examined shipping lists, and ascertained what vessels had sailed the next morning for domestic and foreign ports. It so happened that only half a dozen vessels sailed that day—all coastwise. Within a week dispatches were received from detectives at every one of the six ports: No such boy on board, or heard of. Neither the police nor Gilbert suspected his presence on the *North Star*, which was recorded as having cleared and sailed at four o'clock that afternoon. An unforeseen delay in some formal matter of the ship's papers had, as I have intimated, kept her over a tide, though she had left the upper harbor on time, and her point of departure was duly noted in the records and in *The Daily Advertiser* that morning.

Almost heartbroken, but striving to lean upon that faith which had thus far been to him the shadow of a great rock, Gilbert mechanically took up his tools again. He first insisted, however, that the entire saloon contract should be given up. Wilson pleaded feebly that it would be breaking his word; but Gilbert reminded him that he had never given his promise, in the first place, and that, moreover, no harm would really accrue to the other parties, who could place the contract

and materials in the hands of some other firm, and go on with the work with hardly an hour's delay.

Hurlburt was viciously angry when he was notified of this decision, but he knew well enough that his dupe had, for the time at least, slipped from his clutches. He still had further designs upon him, however, holding in reserve a threat which as yet only lay hidden in the depths of his own brain, fertile of evil creations as a swamp. One thing, he said openly, he would not do: that was, pay a cent to Wilson for the work he had already performed on the new saloon. As there were assistants to pay, in addition to the labor he had himself given, this was a hard blow; but Thomas was in no position to resist. Fortunately for him, a large amount of half worked-up lumber for the new enterprise lay in his shop. This he declared he would hold by "mechanic's lien," until he was at least repaid the amount he had expended for materials; and Hurlburt, knowing that he too was treading on thin ice, yielded the point.

Gilbert Kent drew a long breath when the wagon drove off with the last chip that belonged to the East Boston Company. Shutting the shop-door, he turned to his old partner, and said:—

"Now, Thomas, we are back again where we were before — each with one exception. I do not believe you struck my son or injured him — however responsible you may be, indirectly, for his disappearance. I believe you have told me the whole truth, as far as you know it."

"I have, Gilbert, heaven knows!" put in Wilson, brokenly.

"We have each of us a new object in life, from this day forward. You know what your own is — to conquer your old enemy, who has mastered you so completely again. It will be a hard fight, but you can win, with God's help — a help that is not an uncertain matter, but can be counted on every time, *sure*. You have not touched a drop of liquor since — since that night. Promise me that you won't for a year!"

"I promise, Gilbert, on my" — He stopped, and bit his lip, the crimson mounting to his brow; and hung his head.

"On your honor, Thomas!" said Kent, seizing his hand in his own strong grasp. "If a man's sword is rusty from being laid aside, it's a true weapon, just the same. Hold it drawn and on guard every minute while you are in the enemy's country — or rather while he is in yours — for,

thank God! he owns no rood of land in the universe."

The men were silent for a moment. Then Gilbert went on: "As for me, my one great purpose is to find my boy. I do not believe he is dead. I believe I shall hear from him soon. If not, I shall leave you, and travel until I find him, or drop on the road."

He let go his friend's hand as a sign that the talk was over, and both men turned quietly to their work as of old — wielding plane, saw, and hammer from morning till night, each fighting his own battle.

As yet, Thomas never set lips to a glass, away from home. For a hand, frail and slight as the petal of a flower, stronger tenfold than even Gilbert Kent's, was raised between him and his old indulgence.

In the little gray house down by the wharves, another conflict was in slow, silent progress. When the sparrows, twittering over their morning's allowance of crumbs, twisted their saucy little heads on one side, and peered in at the chamber window, they must have seen a child sitting within, bolstered up in an armchair — not a large chair, yet it needed bolsters — a child with

great blue eyes, always looking out, it seemed, toward the ocean.

"He's there," Dorrie would say, half to herself. "Oh, I know he's there. He used to tell me, mother,—don't you remember?—how he wanted to sail 'way, 'way off to sea. I'm sure my chickens have seen him."

But the gulls, sweeping about on wings aslant to the strong "wave-wind," only looked down at the gray old house, and the white face upturned to them, and made no sign.

Near the chair, in the corner of the room, a small crutch, with dust across the top, stood against the wall. The cane was still close at hand. John had given it to her, and, besides, it was handy to knock with, when she wanted a change of position or a drink of cold water. Her foot ached a good deal in these days; not the one that rested on the cricket, where Terry could sleep with his faithful head pressed close against it; but the foot that was gone, that was nowhere.

"My nothing-foot hurts me so, mother!" Dorrie would say, as night came on. And then Martha would take the child in her arms, and walk to and fro, singing some foolish little song of long ago; sitting down in the old rocker at

last, and rocking to and fro, to and fro, until the patient girl face grew quiet, and with the tender mother voice in her ears — still rocking to and fro, up and down — she floated away on a wonderful white sea of childish dreams, and through all the whispering of the wind, and the rustle of the gull wings and the ripple of wave crests, was still the sound of mother's voice, somewhere among the flocks of cloud lambs overhead, or the foam rabbits jumping about her feet, softly crooning the songs she had heard in the old farmhouse among the pines and apple blossoms, a generation ago.

After a few minutes Dorrie would very likely start awake, with a frightened look in her eyes, and the question, "Has father come?"

Then she would remember and be sorry she had reminded her mother, and would say softly, "Oh, it isn't quite time yet. He'll come soon, won't he, mother? Aren't you glad he's coming soon?"

It was a great cross to her, not to be able to make his toast; and greater still, not to flutter across the floor to meet him. But his step always came straight upstairs from the door, and a kiss and bright smile were ready for him.

Just what was the matter with the child no one knew. Such medical aid as her father could

reach was obtained; but no ailment could be found, beyond a great weakness and prostration, which must be met by indirect means. And such means could only be sparingly used. To administer tonics and stimulants seemed like efforts to restore to strength a broken-winged butterfly; the lightest human touch but further bruised and cramped the frail creature. The accident which had struck so deep, years before, had left her delicate body liable to many ills; and from the terrible anxiety about her father, coupled with wakeful nights, and much jarring upon the sensitive nerves, the little maiden child had lacked but one more blow, it seemed,—that of the disappearance of her playmate and friend, and the fears for his safety,—to worry out the flickering embers of vitality that were left.

She herself took by no means such a despairing view. Her courage was strong, and, while not in the least afraid of death, she earnestly desired to live in the world where God had placed her. So she took without complaint whatever medicines were given her, and cheerfully obeyed the doctor's minutest directions, always saying in the morning that "she really felt better to-day, and was almost ready to go downstairs again."

Overhead in the elm the sparrows and one or two exiled robins twittered and whistled ; while, to Dorrie's great delight, a genuine cricket, a descendant, no doubt, from generations of Revolutionary crickets, which had made the old house their home, chirped a monotonous accompaniment, whenever twilight fell, to her mother's dream-song.

One of Dorrie's greatest comforts in these days was the presence of Lady Courtley. The child was so eagerly glad every time her friend came, and the visits seemed to do her so much good, that Martha one day ventured to broach the subject of her following in the path of the Kents, and boarding in the old house. It was a considerable distance to Mrs. Roberts' *Establishment*, (that was what the estimable landlady called it of late), and the trip was not an easy one for Lady Courtley, now nearing her threescore years and ten.

It was a good deal of a break-up in her quiet, uneventful life ; and poor Mrs. Roberts, seeing her last "genteel boarder" (for she scornfully rejected Mr. Pettingill from that class, not openly of course, but in the tablets of her own critical mind) on the point of departure, scolded and

mourned alternately. It was at last decided, however, that the change should be made; and, to the little invalid's great delight, Lady Courtley was duly installed in one of the vacant rooms not far from her own.

And now, indeed, were dark days for Mr. Pettingill. He abstained wholly from his constitutional, drank gallons of tea without milk, and gave himself up to the gloomiest views of life.

Seeing this, in his frequent visits of condolence (in which he received, not gave, the customary consolation), Mrs. Wilson invited him to join her small colony on the hill; an invitation which he eagerly accepted, and thereupon gained, he confided to Dorrie, a pound and three quarters in one week.

July passed, and August came with its sultry, enervating heats. The air rose in little waves from the waste land about the old house, and the sweet peas and morning glories wilted visibly in spite of the assiduous efforts of Waldo, who watered them in season and out of season; perhaps that was his simple way of being "instant in prayer," for he never approached the little garden without an upward longing for Dorrie to get well and John to get back.

One afternoon he came home an hour earlier than usual, and entered the house with a wild look in his eyes that led Martha to fall back a step or two with apprehension.

“Land, Mr. Pettingill!” she exclaimed, with something of her old spirit. “What’s the matter now? Had a fire over t’ your place, or what?”

Mr. Pettingill hereupon treated himself to a series of gestures, indicative of intense delight, and consisting largely of pantomime laughs, accompanied by frenzied caperings and wavings of his hat.

His landlady scrutinized his face sharply. That was not the way in which it was wont to affect her husband in his worst days; but Mr. Pettin-gill — no, it was impossible! He was above such conduct on principle, and, besides, he detested the taste of liquor.

As she stood there, regarding him with a puzzled look, a feeble voice came from the chamber overhead, accompanied by two knocks on the floor.

“Is n’t that Mr. Pettingill? What has he come home for? Please come up.”

Before Mrs. Wilson could stop him, he was bounding up the stairs two at a time. She fol-

lowed him as fast as she could, her curiosity fully aroused and a faint hope stirring at her heart.

On reaching Dorrie's room, Mr. Pettingill desisted from his previous manifestations of joy, and took a seat beside the little maiden with a reverent air. In that chamber he always whispered as if he were in a church.

Dorrie saw in a moment that something unusual had happened.

"What is it, Mr. Pettingill?" she asked with a nervous tremble in her voice.

"Nothing, nothing, Miss Dorrie," whispered Waldo, his face beaming. "How are you feelin' to-day? First-rate?"

"Yes, yes. What is it, please? Do tell me!"

"Why, I — I — was feeling first-rate myself," stammered the young man delightedly, "and so I supposed you was, too!" And he laughed outright.

Dorrie glanced at her mother and clenched her little hands tight.

"Fact is," he continued, rubbing his thin hands, "I've had pretty good news to-day."

"Good news?"

"Yes — ye — er — a — Do you know anything about the Cape Verde Islands, Miss Dorrie?"

"They're down by Africa, somewhere, I believe."

"And Cape Town, where's that, now?"

"That's in Africa, too, only further off. Do tell, dear Mr. Pettingill!"

The hands were clasped now and the good-hearted fellow, no longer able to keep his secret, the tears rolling down over his own sallow cheeks, began tugging at something in his pocket.

The moment a corner of a white envelope appeared, Dorrie seized it, glanced at the handwriting, then hugged it tight to her heart, and screamed, "*Mother, Mother!*" then fell back among her pillows so white and still that the letter dropped to the ground, forgotten, while Martha, and Lady Courtley, who had been roused from her afternoon nap by the outcry and came hurrying in, applied such restoratives as they had at hand, hardly knowing what to do at first, for Dorrie never before in her life, but once, had fainted.

Mr. Pettingill was for the nonce hustled downstairs, where he and the terrier waited in speechless anxiety for the footsteps to grow quieter overhead.

At last a summons came and up went Waldo once more, this time more softly.

In her chair by the window sat Dorrie, in a halo of radiant joy.

"What's in your letter?" whispered Mr. Pettingill, absently patting his hat in his agitation, under the impression that it was Terry.

"I have n't opened it yet. Won't you, please?"

It was the greatest reward she could have given him, she knew—beyond a dainty kiss, which she drew him down to bestow.

He took out his knife, and making a sort of professional sweep, as if the envelope were a particularly stubborn can, opened it, and drew from it the contents.

"Here 't is," said he, laying Mrs. Yarbrough's perfumed stationery in her lap. Then, for want of something better to say, "Smells good, don't it?"

All three of his hearers laughed the easy laugh of happiness, and waited for Dorrie to read.

Slowly, to make the delight last the longer, she opened the stiff folds of creamy, scented paper (Mrs. Yarbrough and her daughter never used thin, tourist's sheets; they preferred to put on extra postage), and began as follows:—

BARQUE NORTH STAR, July —, 18—.

My dear, dear Dorrie, — I love you enough to know how glad you will be that I am safe and well.

Here the three women (for Dorrie was the oldest of all) had to stop to have a little cry for thankfulness. Then the girl voice, quivering with delight, went on, not without interruptions and exclamations of surprise.

Of course you know how I was out late, and fell down and hurt myself. It was my head and shoulder, and they ache some still, but it don't trouble me much, and they're almost right now. Please tell father, if I don't have time to write him, that the man who got me away into his boat was Bill Dawson. They used to go to school together, Bill says. He has taken splendid care of me and I'm very fond of him. This vessel is bound for the Cape Verde Islands —

"That's what his father's letter said," interpolated Waldo. "I left him at the shop, reading his over the second time. Go on, Miss Dorrie."

— and Cape Town. It will be a long time before I get back, I am afraid, but I'll come as soon as I can, and I am with good friends, Mrs. Yarbrough and her daughter, Miss Edith.

She's about a year older than I am, and real pretty. I think you'd like her very much, for I do. She gave me this paper just now, to write to you.

Dorrie's voice changed a bit as she read this

last, and a trifle of the light went out of her face. But it came back with the next sentence.

Oh, I do want so much to hear from you, Dorrie! Won't you write, right off? Direct to Cape Town, Africa, in care of Mrs. Alexander P. Yarbrough. I just asked Dr. McAllister. He's a splendid doctor, not very old. He and I talk together a good deal. I told him about you, and he says he wishes he knew you, and perhaps he could cure that ache you have sometimes.

He says if you write soon, and put *Via Liverpool and Suez Canal* on the envelope, your letter will get there, — to Cape Town, I mean, — almost as soon as we do, for it will go by steam, and this is just a sailing vessel.

Good-by, dear, dear Dorrie. I send a great deal of love to your father, and to your mother, and to Lady Courtley and kind Mr. Pettingill, and to Terry. And oh, so much to yourself!

Lovingly,

Your brother,

JOHN KENT.

As soon as she had finished the letter, they all wiped their eyes again, touched by his special messages which, with the politeness of St. Paul, he sent to them by name. Mr. Pettingill did not seem to be at all discomposed by his proximity to Terry in the letter, but rather to consider it an honor to himself.

Dorothy was much exhausted by the excitement, and next morning, contrary to the hopes of

those about her, was no better, if not slightly worse.

She grew very restless as the days went on, and spent more and more hours in gazing out over the sea, toward those far-off islands where so much of her heart had gone. And oftener still she questioned her hovering chickens — “Oh, have you seen him? Have you seen him? Is he coming soon?”

CHAPTER XIX.

THE HIDDEN CHAMBER.

EDITH YARBROUGH followed her guide timidly, with mincing steps, along the musty passage of the old cathedral.

“Be careful,” he called; “there may be stairs here anywhere. If you hear me tumbling about, away down below you, you’ll know where not to go.”

My lady had not quite recovered her composure yet.

“It’s all very well for you to joke,” she complained. “You’re only a boy, and you don’t care anything about being shut up in a horrid hole like this, with nobody near” —

“I don’t call you nobody, Miss Edith.”

“And your dress all spoiled, and — ow! — your hat knocked in, and” — she hesitated for another woe in her catalogue.

“And your pony gone, and dust an inch thick?” suggested John.

It was fortunate that she could not see his

eyes twinkle in the dark. His voice was perfectly grave.

"Yes, and lots more. Do you suppose there are mice here?" as a new horror suggested itself to her.

"Hardly. I don't believe even a church mouse could live just on dust and rocks. But look at this, Miss Edith."

"This" was a small apartment which must have been cut out of the solid rock, upon and against which the church was built. It was really, I think, the ancient vestry, where the priests donned their robes and ornaments preparatory to appearing before their congregations.

The young Americans who had taken refuge in the ancient pile had no idea of the use of the little chamber in which they now found themselves, as neither of them had ever been in a cathedral of the Roman Catholic Church. Edith was of opinion that it was merely a storeroom, while John, who had the vaguest possible notions as to such edifices, could not get out of his head the idea that they were in an ancient tomb. This surmise, however, he did not mention to his companion, lest she should run away from their safe shelter.

"There's one thing we're sure of," said he: "we're safely out of the storm, and for that matter, there don't seem to be any more thunder and lightning. But just hear it pour!"

The only light in the place was from one small window high up in the wall. A bit of red glass still remained to tell of the former glories of the cathedral, and cast a faint, ruddy light through the chamber.

"I'm cold," said Edith with a shiver. "This place feels like a cellar. No, don't take your jacket off, I won't wear it!" She was beginning to feel a little ashamed of her grumbling, which was half manner, as John well knew.

It's astonishing what a petulant habit girls, otherwise charming, will sometimes allow themselves to contract. They scream at trifling dangers, complain piteously of slight discomforts, and exaggerate momentary inconvenience into mighty trouble—all with the idea, more or less definitely present in their pretty heads, that their conduct is attractive to persons of the other sex; the fact being that nine times out of ten the impression given is quite the reverse of winning—or the man's or boy's admiration will not be worth having.

John's quiet and unmoved — save by an occasional grave smile — reception of her little airs and frets and pouts ; nay, humiliating to confess, of her exhibitions of dignity as well — was fast teaching Miss Yarbrough to despise them herself ; a result which would have delighted him, though he would have been the last to act the part of a prig or a pedant, in trying to reform her character.

“I'll tell you what,” said John, being balked of his generous disposition of his jacket, and greatly pleased with her refusal of it, “I don't see why we can't have a little fire. I've plenty of matches and it's all stone here.”

“Then how are you going to get anything to burn?”

“The old door. It does nobody any good as it is. And your mother can pay the damage, if anybody complains. As for the wind, in the first place, I don't believe it blows so hard now, and we can build our fire — just a little one, you know — right in this corner, out of the way of the draught.”

“Well, do hurry, please. I hate to be left alone.”

“‘With nobody’?” quoted John slyly, as he started on his foraging tour.

He found it hard work to get any fuel out of the old door, after all, it was so firmly bolted together. Several good-sized splints had been wrenched out from the post, however, at their entrance, and gathering these, with a few tough bits from the door itself, he managed to make a fair armful. A glance out into the unroofed aisles of the cathedral showed him that the sky was still dark with clouds, and rain falling briskly, though the force of the storm had much abated. Turning toward the inner chamber again, he met Edith in the passage.

"John," she whispered, clinging convulsively to his arm, "there's somebody or something alive in there!"

Now, "something alive" possessed no terrors for John. Had it been something with a tinge of the uncanny or the supernatural, or a jagged fork of lightning, he would have faced it, but with a stricture at the heart and a creepy sensation around the roots of his hair. As it was, he laughed at the girl's terror, not scoffingly, but wholly in a reassuring way. Were I a poet, I would say, in a rondeau or a villanelle, that there is no silver bullet so fatal to a phantom of any sort as a maiden's silvery laugh. But if

John's laugh was not silver, it was solid gold, for a heartier, tenderer, honester laugh I never knew.

"Let's go back," said he, "and then the 'somethings alive' will be two to one. Don't be afraid, Miss Edith. There can't be anything to hurt you here right in His house where he put you out of the way of His storm."

Edith mentally thought that her comrade's reference to the Most High and his doings savored altogether too much of familiarity, but she deferred her criticism until a more fitting season. She hated to go back, but she was still more afraid to stay in the passage alone. Who knew what bony fingers might close about her throat, or drag her down to dungeons, never more to be seen of mortal eye! John's laugh was far better company, she could not help admitting, than the fitful sighing of the wind through the eyeless sockets of the old cathedral.

Holding his jacket like a little child, she followed him once more into the room from which she had just fled with palpitating heart.

John walked in boldly, talking all the time, to prevent the silence from frightening her. As he had expected, nothing was to be heard or seen, beyond the bare walls, indistinct in the reddened

light from the little pane, and the dull rustle of rain and wind outside.

"Here's where we'll have the fire," he chattered on. "Where the smoke'll go to, I don't know. If it gets too thick, why, we can go out into the passage again, anyway. Will you hold the matches and splints, please? There — I'll just whittle up a few shavings for kindling — my! is n't this oak wood tough! Now a match — thank you, Miss Edith" —

"Do call me Edith," she broke in impetuously. "One would think you were forty, and I thirty, to hear you 'Miss' me; or else that you were a servant!"

She blushed a little as she made the last suggestion. But to John, who had so often heard his father read "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ," the word carried no unworthy associations.

"I shall be glad to be *your* servant as long as I can," he said simply, looking up at her, from his whittlings. "But it's nice to call you Edith, just as I say 'Dorrie' at home."

Edith bit her lip in the darkness and drew herself up a little. But then it was more difficult to keep her hand on John's shoulder, which she had to do or be dreadfully afraid, every minute. His

back was reassuring; but oh, she did wish he'd get through with those tiresome kindlings and turn round!

Flash! went the match. They watched it breathlessly, and presently a tiny flame shot up through the shavings, throwing a cheery glow around the old stone cell, which immediately began to have a homelike aspect.

"There," cried John, in a tone of great satisfaction, "now you may really say there's something alive here. Hear it purr!"

The rustle and snapping of the little fire lifted the load of apprehension completely from Edith's mind.

"It's a comfort," said she brightly, "to hear one's mother tongue again, after a week of this Portuguese jargon. The fire speaks good, honest English."

"What does it say?"

For a reply, the girl broke out into the old song:—

"'Mid pleasures and palaces
Though we may roam,
Be it ever so humble,
There's no place like home!"

and sang it through to the end.



The rustle and snapping of the little fire lifted the load of apprehension completely from Edith's mind. — *Page 274.*

All the while she was singing, the fire's soft accompaniment filled the pauses and kept up its own low, contented murmur.

When Edith's last rich contralto note died away, there were tears in the boy's eyes. Perhaps it was from the smoke, which hung around the ceiling of the room, in a thin blue cloud. When John spoke, it was in his natural boyish tone.

"I don't see why it isn't smokier here," he began. "The draft comes in from the passageway, and" —

Bang! came a great stone down upon the floor, followed by a rush of gravel, and the sounds of some struggling body almost directly above their heads.

Edith sprang up with a scream of terror, and clung to John's arm, speechless with fright. The noise ceased as suddenly as it had begun, and nothing could be heard but the light drip of the rain outside and the crackling fire within.

"Edith," said John, after waiting in vain for further demonstrations from their unseen guest, "it's like an enchanted palace, in a fairy story. I shouldn't be at all surprised if an ogre or a gnome should pop up through the floor, should you?"

“O John, le — let’s go !” she whispered, her teeth fairly chattering and her heart thumping so she could hardly utter the words.

Another fall of gravel and a renewed scratching, panting, and struggling somewhere above them.

It was John who, reluctant to fly before an unseen and unknown enemy, suddenly announced the discovery of the solution of the puzzle.

Protected by a jutting mass of stone, and therefore in the shadow, was an opening like a small door, except that it was at least six feet from the ground. John uttered an exclamation, and pointed to this hole. A strange sight met the girl’s eye, rather adding to her fright than diminishing it. It was an elongated, pale face staring down at them, from the midst of the smoke. From its chin depended a hoary beard. Planted firmly upon the edge or sill of the door were two white streaks, thin and bony, where its hands should be. It spoke no word, but remained as motionless as the rocks themselves, gazing upon the intruders with lackluster eye.

Edith hid her face on John’s shoulder, but had no voice for her terror.

The boy himself could not shake off an eerie

sensation of dread, such as always assailed him at any suggestion of the unearthly. He would not yield to the horror that was stealing over him, but cried out, "Who are you? What do you want?" at the same time giving the fire a kick which sent a volley of smoke and sparks directly towards the strange creature.

The effect was immediate and startling. It shook its head as if disturbed or angered at the smoke, uttered a queer sort of bleat, and half slid, half sprang down upon the floor at their very feet. Edith shrieked, and John caught up a firebrand, but the author of their fright stopped for no conflict; followed by another discharge of gravel from the wall, he dashed past them, and out of the passageway, almost overthrowing the cowering girl, in his wild haste to get away. His flight was not so swift, however, that John did not make out his identity.

"O Edith," he cried with a sudden burst of relieved laughter, "a goat! Not a ghost, but a goat!"

Edith raised her pale face, to see if he were joking. No; it was true, and clear enough that the animal had been concealed in the recess till driven out by smoke.

"Anyway," said Edith, with a tremble in her voice which showed that she was not yet wholly reassured, "if it was a goat, it can talk. Hark!"

They listened. Voices, unmistakably human, and as unmistakably angry, came echoing through the vaulted passageway.

"Wait here," whispered John, gliding off toward the ruined portion of the cathedral. In less than a minute he was back again, looking serious. He told Edith the plain truth, keeping back nothing. The harmless four-legged ghost had decamped, following the route taken by the pony; but in the cathedral, grouped near the main entrance, and making excited gestures toward the low passageway, were a number of substantial apparitions on two feet, seemingly bent on mischief of a most unpleasant character. All of them were armed with bludgeons, and one carried a gun. They were apparently natives of the town below, and must have seen the English boy and girl take refuge in the cathedral. This in itself was desecration, in their superstitious eyes; and it was probable that some child or peasant woman, lingering near as the storm abated, had witnessed or heard the demolition of the old door and had smelled the smoke of their fire.

The report that their cathedral was invaded, its walls broken down, and finally the threatened destruction of the sacred ruins by fire, had roused the ordinarily peaceful inhabitants of the ancient capital to fury. This self-appointed and quickly organized band of vigilants, fortunately ignorant of the precise number of evil doers they were to punish, had now cornered the fugitives like rats in a wall. Mingled with their fierce glances and gestures, John could discern a certain exultation in their swarthy faces as they pointed toward the opening.

All this he imparted to Edith in half the time it takes to write it ; there would not be the slightest use in trying to explain matters, they knew. Neither of them could speak a word of Portuguese ; and there were the eloquent broken door and blue curls of smoke.

Soft steps were heard on the stone aisles, and the harsh voices became silent. John felt that action must be taken, and that without delay.

CHAPTER XX.

AT THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.

LEAVING Edith once more alone, John hurried back to the entrance of the passageway, reaching it considerably in advance of the attacking party. Aided by the deep shadows of the cathedral, he succeeded in thrusting the broken door into its place, without exposing himself to view. The result was as he had hoped. The men fell back in some confusion, seeing a barricade erected, and fearing an ambuscade. The crumbling walls of the ruin echoed with their vociferous comments and cries, now no longer subdued by the hope of a surprise.

John hastened to Edith's side. Rather to his amazement, he found her cool and collected. It seemed as if fright had done its worst with her, and now the pendulum was swinging the other way.

"What do you mean to do?" she whispered.

"I don't know, yet. The door will frighten them back for a few minutes. They'll begin to throw big rocks against it soon, I expect."

John was wrong there. Nothing would have tempted them to commit the sacrilege of battering down a door of this holy place. When it came to battering down a heretic intruder, that was another matter.

“Where do you suppose that goat came from, John?”

“Why, from that hole, of course.”

He did not see what she was driving at.

“How did he get there? Not through our passage, for the door was fastened till we came.”

“That’s so! He must have come from outside. The hole up there is a tunnel, may be, leading out!”

He sprang toward it and, aided by his old agility in climbing to his mousehole in his father’s shop, was up in a minute.

“I’ll explore,” he called back to Edith. “We don’t want to be caught in a trap here, and be smoked out like the goat.”

After a few seconds, which seemed hours to the girl, he came backing down, bringing a stream of gravel, and unable to stop himself till he landed on the floor of the room, exactly as their long-haired visitor had descended — except that John had the advantage of not returning head first.

“Hurry, Edith!” he exclaimed, seizing her hand. “It’s all right. We’ll be out in a jiffy. Wait—let me get up first and then I’ll pull you up.”

She did not need much pulling after all. Projections in the rock afforded ample support for her little feet, and she soon crouched beside him in what she now saw plainly was an ancient doorway, from which a flight of stairs, or a ladder, may once have reached to the floor.

John jumped down once more and stamped out every spark of fire, then was quickly at her side and in advance.

The tunnel was originally, no doubt, of height sufficient to allow a man to walk erect; but earth and stones falling in had choked it, covering the steps far out of sight, and leaving but a narrow and low passage, barely large enough to admit an animal of the size of a goat.

Creeping on their hands and knees they worked their way upward, dislodging as little gravel as possible, and speaking not a word. After a few yards of this progress, a light glimmered ahead; it grew larger and brighter, and presently they emerged on the hillside at a point entirely hidden from any one in the cathedral proper. The

mouth of this long-disused entrance by which, it may be, the priests stole in and out from their solemn offices at the altar, was in the form of a small cave, evidently a frequent resort of goats and asses seeking shelter from the storm and burning sun. A strong draft came from within, bringing an odor of smoke from the hidden apartment. Of course this draft had never been felt so long as the door into the apse remained closed, and the inhabitants of the present generation knew nothing of the rear stairway or exit.

Rain was still falling lightly as the fugitives, crouching and taking advantage of every bush and heap of rock, glided stealthily along, not toward the path by which they had ascended to the cathedral, but in a direction which John thought would take them out somewhere near the Porta Praya trail, this being, as I have said, further inland.

For half an hour they clambered over the rocks, drawing freer breaths as no pursuers appeared on their track. As they rounded a small knoll two miles at least from the scene of their adventure, Edith uttered an exclamation of delight. Just ahead of them a pony was feeding. He had a white nose which was strangely familiar. He

was nibbling at the herbage among the rocks with an assiduity that no other pony could have displayed ; in short, it was the runaway, shrewdly halting between the two termini of his route.

He submitted with dignity to his recapture by John, looking at him out of one eye, with an expression which plainly said : " If you won't say anything about it, I won't."

Once mounted on pony's back, Edith's courage and spirits rose, and she became her old saucy self. John plodded patiently by her side, smiling at her feigned petulances, answering her merry sallies in like vein, but keeping a sharp lookout in the rear. Before they were in sight of the roofs of Porto Praya, two figures appeared, hurrying along the trail to meet them. It was McAllister and faithful Dawson, who were troubled by the long absence of the young people, though they had surmised that the runaways had sought some refuge from the storm and were waiting for it to cease.

The greeting between the parties was warm, and battles were fought over again, as all four turned their faces toward home.

Upon reaching the barque, where Mrs. Yarbrough preferred to stay during their sojourn at

the islands, they found that lady terribly alarmed at their nonappearance. Her apprehension was by no means allayed by the account they gave of their experiences, and she slept but little that night. The captain and the rest of the party were inclined to make light of the adventure, but the very next morning the governor general came on board with a grave and troubled face. Complaints had already been made to him, he said, of the desecration of the cathedral by strangers. Rumors were afloat of violence intended, with reprisals on the property of the Americans. The governor ended by begging them, in the cause of order and quiet, to weigh anchor and continue their voyage, which he knew had already been delayed beyond the time originally set for their departure.

While the Yarbroughs and Captain Holmes were receiving the excited and voluble little Portuguese official, a smart-looking gig dashed up, and the British consul, from a neighboring island of the group, presented himself at the side. Upon being welcomed with due honor, he preferred the same request as that which the governor had made known. News of trouble from Santiago had already reached them across

the straits, and the consul's earnest advice was to avoid all possible collision with the islanders, whose fury would subside with the departure of the hated foreigners.

Captain Holmes, therefore, after consultation with his officers and passengers, sent an imperative recall to two or three men who were on shore, bade farewell to the reigning powers, and at precisely noon set sail with a fair wind for Cape Town.

There had naturally been some discussion as to John's continuance of the voyage. Mrs. Yarbrough kindly offered to advance him a sum of money sufficient to pay his passage home in the first vessel from that port to the States. On the other hand, it would hardly be safe for the boy to remain at Porto Praya, or in its vicinity, where he might be recognized as one of the cathedral offenders, and suffer serious injury at the hands of the would-be avengers. The governor also said that he knew of no steam vessel likely to leave the Cape Verde Islands for several weeks northward bound, and that John probably would reach home as soon, if not sooner, by taking a steamer up the east coast of the continent and through the canal. It was, therefore, decided

that he should accompany the family on their further journeyings — much to the satisfaction of all on board.

It should be stated that, before the governor left the barque, Mrs. Yarbrough placed in his hands a considerable sum of money, to be used in replacing the oaken door in the cathedral and the balance to be distributed among the poor of the parish. Bearing this balm for hurt minds in his pocket, the ruler of this small kingdom returned to the seat of government, where, it may be presumed, he succeeded in healing the wounds left by the visitors. At any rate, the matter was never heard of again.

The North Star made a good offing, and for several days enjoyed smooth seas and light, fair breezes. But the stormy season was at hand, and soon Captain Holmes realized that it would take his best seamanship to bring his vessel safe into port.

From Porto Praya to Cape Town, as the crow flies, is a trifle over four thousand miles. A Cunard steamer under favorable circumstances would make the distance in twelve days. Seven long weeks elapsed before the North Star beat up against an east wind past Mouille Point, and

came to anchor in the sheltered expanse of Table Bay, under the lee of its splendid break-water.

John and Edith stood side by side by the taff-rail, which, as it was floodtide, was nearest land. Directly before them lay the spires and roofs of Cape Town, in the rear of which the bold spurs of Devil's Peak and Lion's Head towered three thousand feet in air, their summits swathed in the peculiar white cloud that a southeast wind always wraps about these peaks in dense folds.

The base of the mountain was covered with luxuriant foliage of oaks, firs, and garden shrubs, and dotted with villas of wealthy suburban residents. Hardly a cable's length from their own vessel a monstrous ocean steamer was discharging her cargo at the docks, with a great rattling of machinery and shouting of British sailors, who seemed to spend far more exertion in ordering and driving the coolie laborers on the wharf, than in actually lending a hand to the work. The scene on all sides, close at hand, was one of bustle and activity, such as they had not seen since they left Boston, while the solemn heights almost overhanging them lent a grandeur and impressiveness that can hardly be realized by

those who have not visited the modern city of Cape Town.

I said that the two young people were on deck drinking in these novel and grand sights; Mrs. Yarbrough was not with them. The long and stormy passage from the island had proved too much for her strength, and she had not left her berth for weeks.

Next day she made a great effort and with the rest of the party went ashore, the health officer and other government officials having completed their examination. Through the kindness of a resident English family, to whom Mrs. Yarbrough had letters, she obtained lodgings in a villa at Wynberg, about six miles by rail from the city proper.

Here the poor lady sank into a low fever, from which, after a month of utter prostration, she began slowly to recover. All this time John was a constant attendant upon her and her daughter. They could hardly have told whether they regarded him as a servant or as a member of the family. Certainly he served, and was proud and happy in so doing. The same Master who bade his disciples wash one another's feet decreed that no joy should be greater than that of glad and loving service.

So the months of our winter — the summer of Cape Colony — passed, and still John could not leave his new friends. He had heard from Dorrie and his father almost immediately upon his arrival. After telling of the joy of receiving his first letter, Dorrie wrote:—

You do not know how nice it is, dear John, to have Lady Courtley here. We often talk about you, and what strange things you must see, and say what a lot of stories you will have to tell when you get home.

I suppose Miss Edith is a tall, strong girl, is n't she? I should like to see her. Do you take long walks with her, and climb hills when you are on shore? Mr. Pettingill sends his love, and wants to know if there is any hunting near Cape Town. He says he always wanted to hunt lions. Terry sends you a mark of his paw. Here it is. Father was so glad to hear that you were getting over your fall. He cried a little when I told him you sent your love. And then he said, "Tell him I say, God bless him!" And, O John, father has been well ever since you went away! I am so happy and happy about it! I hope you will come home as soon as you can. The chickens look as if they had seen you. I send you my dear love by them and by this.

Your little

DORRIE.

Not a word, you see, of her increasing weakness. She did not want to worry him, and she was sure he would take the earliest possible

opportunity to return home. The illness of Mrs. Yarbrough, with her demands upon her attendant, never presented itself to Dorrie's mind.

She could not help longing to hear his step and his merry voice, and she had a calendar, — issued by the firm which employed Mr. Pettingill, and embellished by representations of various appetizing fruits such as olives, nectarines, and Bartlett pears, growing in a proximity and profusion utterly regardless of climate and season, — whereon she marked off the days, one by one as they passed. Some of the marks were very crooked and trembly, and one or two were blurred; these were her hard days, when her foot gave sharp twinges and the sun made her feverish and Terry's barking gave her a headache; when Africa seemed too far away for any one ever to come back from its shores, and life was nothing but a hot, glaring, headaching hopelessness, to be dizzily limped through.

Still no word of complaint in her letters, written in straggling, childish characters to her "Two-feet," across the ocean.

It was late autumn before she received an answer to her first letter. John was then hoping to leave Cape Town by December first, at the latest. How he was disappointed, we have seen.

“Do your duty at all costs, my boy,” wrote his father, when he heard of this new complication. “I miss you terribly; but if John Kent came home when God had given him work to do somewhere else, I should miss you still more. The worst kind of missing, my dear son, is where you look right into another’s face and miss him, miss his own true noble self, and see only a mean, cowardly creature in his place.”

John showed the letter to McAllister, who marveled inwardly that such grand words should come from a carpenter; but when he reached that point, he suddenly recollected, and wondered no more. An hour or two afterward, John found the young physician sitting under a yew tree in the villa garden reading the Book of Luke.

From Mr. Pettingill came but one epistle, brief and to the point, as follows:—

MR. JOHN KENT:—

Dear Sir, — I ship you this day, per Globe Transatlantic Express and Parcels Company, Two (2) Cans Preserved Prunes and Two (2) Cans First Quality Pickled Oysters, with my best respects. I am in good health and trust you are the same.

Your obedient servant and well-wisher,

W. PETTINGILL.

P. S. Do not open the soldered end, and keep in a cool place.

Edith, and her mother too, received messages from home, though of different tenor. As this is a chapter of letters, a portion of one of Edith's which she had received from her father and read aloud may not be out of place. It was dated November 12. The special passage which interested John was this:—

I have been very busy this fall, not only in the bank, but in other matters of real estate which have bothered me in the courts.

“He always talks to me about business and politics,” explained Edith.

There is a piece of valuable property in the Fort Hill district, the ownership of which has been contested for the last dozen years. Your grandmother is one of the heirs at law, who claim that a certain deed was made by a previous owner, away back in 1818, but not recorded, and that by the terms of that deed the estate vested in our family. The original owner was unfortunate in his habits, lost his money, mortgaged his house two or three times, and finally ran away and died in foreign parts, leaving affairs in a general mix.

His mortgagees took possession of the land and house, and sold them, the deed to your great-grandfather having been in the meantime lost. Afterward it turned up, and the parties went to law about it. It looks now as if we should prevail. Your grandmother is a good deal excited over the matter,

and can talk of nothing else. It's a queer old place, this house, in a vacant lot penned in completely by business streets.

John's eyes had been growing rounder and rounder.

"Why," he exclaimed, when this point in the letter was reached, "it must be the very house I live in! Don't you know how I told you about the funny way you had to go in through an alley to get at it? Oh, I do hope it will turn out to be yours!"

"It must be worth a great deal," observed Mrs. Yarbrough feebly, from the bed. "Go on with the letter, Edie."

There's one piece of bad news I've got to tell you. Do you remember that pair of beautiful Worcester vases that Sir Edmund Horton gave me and that we kept in the drawing-room cabinet? Well, they're gone — stolen, I suppose, while we were at Newport last summer. We've looked high and low for them and put the police in possession of all the facts, but thus far not a trace of them has been found. It must have been a cunning thief who stole them, for there were plenty of more showy articles around not worth a tenth part of their value. I believe there's a gang at work on the Avenue and all through the Back Bay.

Don't you remember that elegant little malachite table which Mrs. Norton had stolen from her house last June?

It turned up in a Chicago auction room a month ago, but nobody knew where it came from, an honest dealer in second-hand furniture having bought it from a stranger.

A week ago last Tuesday was our presidential and state election — which I suppose does n't interest you South African ladies in the least. There was great excitement, though, all through the States. The "solid south" voted squarely for Hancock, and an almost equally solid north for General Garfield. The result was uncertain till late at night, and the feeling so intense that it was almost like war times. New York State, with its thirty-five electoral votes, turned the scale for the Republicans, and Garfield is elected. Massachusetts is always strongly republican on presidential years, and returned Governor Long by a heavy majority. All over the country the newspapers are still full of hot-headed editorials on one side or the other. The campaign was bitter and personal. A host of disappointed office seekers are sowing ugly seeds of discontent north and south. No one can tell what will come of it; but with James A. Garfield and Chester A. Arthur at Washington, and a population of sensible and law-abiding people, we hope and believe that no violent deed will result from the ill-feeling which, after all, centers in individuals rather than animates the masses of either party.

There, my dear, you have had enough politics by this time, I think. Tell your mother that the Adamses have moved; — etc. etc.

Letters received shortly afterward announced that the lawsuit had been decided in favor of Mr.

Yarbrough's grandmother, now over eighty-five years of age. The old lady did not live long to enjoy her triumph, but left houses and lands behind her before the winter snows had begun to melt. As no will was found, the ancient house and land descended to her grandson, Mr. Yarbrough.

Edith and her mother now desired more earnestly than ever to return to Boston. Cape Town, with its associations of sickness and bad news, had become a dreary place for them.

Still, Doctor McAllister did not think it prudent for his patient to be moved. John and the doctor made one or two excursions into the back country, and enjoyed such adventures as would have delighted the heart of Mr. Pettingill. They killed but little game, however, for Harold McAllister was too ardent a lover of nature to want to needlessly stop the beating of a single heart in its leafy coverts, whether of bird or beast. His collections of plants and minerals increased rapidly, John taking part enthusiastically in procuring specimens. I hope Harold's judgment as to the necessity of Mrs. Yarbrough's delay was not warped by his eagerness in his natural history pursuits ; and, indeed, I am sure it was not. For

Harold's mental and moral make-up was such as to have rather led him to advise haste than delay in leaving Cape Town, had he discovered the least tinge of self-interest in his motives.

March and April were glorious months in Cape Colony, with sunshine, flowers, and cool, invigorating breezes. The North Star had long ago disappeared below the western horizon. One by one, during the following month, the doctor's cases of specimens were packed and boxed for the long journey home. On Monday morning, the sixth day of June, Mrs. Yarbrough, Edith, now a slim, handsome girl of fifteen, McAllister, and John Kent, bidding their Wynberg entertainers farewell, went on board the steam packet Zanzibar, from Cape Town for Port Said, the Mediterranean terminus of the Suez Canal.

Edith and her mother were still saddened by the thought of the empty chair at home, though the old lady had long been a sufferer from acute pains and could hardly be wished back from her new Home, and they were longing to see husband and father. But at Port Said, which they reached on the evening of July 3, they found telegraphic news of such an appalling calamity which had befallen their country, that they forgot

their private griefs in the rush of patriotic emotion and the great sorrow which they bore in common with their nation. Six thousand miles from America, they were within the mournful shadow of the crape-bordered Stars and Stripes.

CHAPTER XXI.

A DANGEROUS FISHERMAN.

IN the low-browed junk shop owned and managed by Adolf Jagger — as a small and weather-beaten sign above the broadly open entrance indicated — there was, one hot evening in June (while the Zanzibar was plowing her way steadily northward through the waters of the Indian Ocean), a lively discussion in progress. The proprietor of the establishment was seated on a heap of rusty iron chains, and talking in guarded tones, while his companion, evidently excited, if not exhilarated, by recent potations, spoke so loudly and angrily that two or three red-faced, barefooted urchins paused at the door of the shop and listened, not to the words, which they could not understand, but to the tones, which betokened something unusual in the colloquy of the two men.

Jagger left his seat and made a threatening gesture toward the lookers-on, whereat they scattered and then closed in again, drawn by the

fascination always exerted on a crowd by an angry man or dog.

"Talk softly, Hurlburt," growled the junk-dealer uneasily, resuming his former seat, "or this interview's done."

"Interview?" sneered the other with a tipsy leer. "What big words we do use, eh? I tell you, Jagger, if you think that just 'cause you've been to college, and can tell a good piece of crockery from a bad" —

He got no further, for the man jumped at him like an ape, clutching his thick neck with his long fingers, and shaking him till his hat fell off and he gasped for breath.

"Hush-sh-sh! I tell you," hissed the furious shopkeeper. "Don't you see those four pairs of ears at the door? I tell you, I won't have it! Mind, now!"

He relaxed his hold, and withdrawing his hands from the man's throat, stood erect, glaring toward the street.

The number of spectators had immediately doubled on witnessing the assault just described. The air was sultry, and sidewalk, building, and contents were hot. Jagger hated to close his shop, but he apparently considered such action neces-

sary, with his friend in his present condition, for he advanced once more to the front, and with a scowl slammed the door in the faces of the sidewalk committee.

The rear portion of the shop was encumbered by piles of rubbish, old ropes, chairs, scraps of iron, and junk of all kinds and sorts. There was so much of this stock in trade that it culminated in a huge heap, seemingly composed of a mixture of all the materials on hand, and reaching from floor to ceiling.

Jagger now grumbly lighted a candle, and feeling round a bit with his hand, among a lot of old rags that projected from this mound, gave a slight push. Thereupon a section of its surface yielded inward and disclosed an opening large enough to allow a man to pass in. The rags and rope's ends were so cunningly arranged on and around the door that no outsider would have mistrusted its presence, or that of the inner chamber, which formed the hollow core of the mound.

Stooping, and carefully shielding the flame of the candle with his hand, the owner and contriver of this curious hiding place crept in, followed by Hurlburt, who closed the door behind them.

The little room was hot as an oven, though a small shuttered aperture in the wall, opening upon the space between that and Wilson's carpenter shop, admitted a slender modicum of fresh air.

"Now," said Hurlburt doggedly, "let me see those beauties."

Jagger hesitated a moment; then apparently concluding it was best to humor the big saloon-keeper, touched a spring, which opened one of the cupboard doors seen by John's wondering eyes a year before. The upper shelf had been removed, to make room for the two splendid pieces of costly ware that nearly filled the niche, standing fourteen inches high, from base to lip.

The sides were of pure lemon yellow, with curious markings and a fine miniature landscape on each. Elaborate side-pieces flanked each vase, in leafage design.

"What d'yer say was the name of 'em?" inquired Hurlburt taking down one of them and turning it over carelessly.

"Let me have it — you'll smash it, sure!" exclaimed the other. "I won't tell you a word about it till I get it in my own hands. There!" fondling it like a living thing, and dusting it affectionately with his handkerchief, "is n't it a

darling? I really hate to part with these twins, I do!"

"You ain't told me the name yet," persisted Hurlburt with a drunken man's grave pertinacity.

"It's Royal Worcester — there's the name on the bottom — see?"

"What 'll they bring?"

Jagger looked over his shoulder, and lowered his voice.

"One thousand in the market, besides the special value the owner may put upon 'em. It's about time to advertise the pair," he added with a sigh.

"Don't you forget to give me my share," remarked Hurlburt.

"Hurlburt, you are drunk. Did I ever cheat you out of a cent? And you have n't half kept your own promises."

"What d' yer mean?"

"Where's Tom Wilson that was going to chip in with our crowd? We've lost a dozen good chances for want of a man that's handy with tools, and here's a month of hot weather gone already."

Hurlburt rose unsteadily to his feet.

"I'll get him!" he said with an oath. "He

slipped off the hook once, but I'll get him next time."

"What you got for bait?" inquired Jagger, humoring his metaphor, and relieved to see indications of his leaving.

"No bait at all, curse him! I've tried a hook long enough. Now I'll net him — scare him in."

"How?"

"I can bring a dozen witnesses to swear they saw him knock that John Kent down, then saw the boy dead on the sidewalk. Some of 'em chased a sailor that ran off with the body and dumped it in the harbor. 'Now, Tom Wilson, my old mess-mate,' says I, the next time I see him, 'you've got to do just's I say. For if you don't, you go before the Grand Jury for manslaughter!'"

And with a thick laugh and another huge oath, the gentlemanly manager of the "Open Hand Supply Company" left the junk shop and swaggered off down the street.

CHAPTER XXII.

WINTER.

NEVER had winter been longer or drearier in the Wilson family than that which succeeded John's disappearance. That all the members of the household endeavored to conceal their own low spirits, and raise those of the rest, but intensified and emphasized that sense of loss which was constantly felt. After John's first letter, and one more, written just before he left Santiago, there had been a long gap in his correspondence, by reason of the stormy and protracted passage of the North Star. Then came the news of Mrs. Yarbrough's illness at Cape Town and the consequent delay.

Gilbert might have added to his fund of information concerning the absentees by hunting up Mr. Yarbrough. But a sensitive pride, overstrained, perhaps, kept him from taking a step which would seem like a forcing of acquaintance upon the rich banker, with a possible view to patronage. He, therefore, knew nothing of the

lawsuit concerning the house in which he lived, until he read John's meager accounts, evidently written with no very clear understanding of the merits of the case. The thought of moving hardly troubled him, for his shop and his library were his world—his material dwelling-place—and it mattered little to him what was his environment without.

As autumn grew into winter, and the old elm-tree cast away its leaves for a more glorious inheritance to come, the carpenter retired earlier to his room, and there, drawing his armchair up before the embers that flushed and paled with every breath of the north wind beating upon the gray roof, and moaning around the eaves and gables, he would spend the long evening hours in lofty company, forgetting all that was lowly and commonplace in his life, and lost in the Elysium of an existence that knew neither past, present, nor future.

Had he been a man of sterner fiber, of more intense and nervous moral energy, he would hardly have sought respite from his cares in just this way, which, though administering a refined and high pleasure to the better part of his nature, did not awaken nor refresh his best self.

That, for its nourishment and growth, demands not a couch, but a field of action. It mattered much, to be sure, that Gilbert Kent's couch was not of rose petals, but honest embrowned leaves of classic folio and quarto; still it was a bed, and a selfish one.

For at the other end of the house, removed from his fireside by only a few steps across the intervening and unfurnished room, were his brothers and sisters in sore need of his love. That the fruit he had carried off and was devouring in his solitary corner was distasteful to the rest did not relieve him of responsibility: his business, as it is every man's business, was to find the cup of cold water which should be grateful to the little ones about him, and so ministering, to follow in the footsteps of his Master, who sought not to please himself, but those to whom the Father had sent him. There was much, too, on Gilbert's bookshelves that would have delighted the depressed little circle so near him, had it occurred to him to share it with them. In justice to him, I will say that it did not.

In his son, up to this time in his life, I believe that this fault, or this lack of a virtue, in his dreamy and self-centered father, was being

steadily replaced by a growing love for his kind, which found its purest and keenest joy in "doing for" others, to use the homely New England phrase. In John, this emotion did not expend itself utterly in honest indignation at wrong and valiant rescue of suffering lady or beaten dog, but constantly grew and expressed itself in daily service for those about him, realizing, unconsciously, George Herbert's lines:—

All worldly joys go less,
To the one joy of doing kindnesses.

The beauty and glory of the religion of Christ is that it is air which all may breathe; its paths of pleasantness are for little feet as well as for the tramp of greaved and helmeted knight. In these gray days of heart-sickness and deferred hope, Mr. Pettingill was of the elect who are chosen to do their Master's service; most simply and as a little child did he fulfill his trust, while the nobler intellect slumbered in self-seeking.

Every afternoon, as soon as work at the factory was over, did that young man hastily doff the grimy garments in which he had been toiling since morning, and buttoning a threadbare coat around his neck, hurry to the ferry and up the

steep streets toward home, with such speed that he was usually quite out of breath and more or less shaky about the knees when he arrived.

“How’s Dorrie?” was his first question, and, “Can I go up?” the second.

From that moment until the lights were out — with the exception of a few minutes at the table downstairs, when he devoured, indiscriminately, the food and drink set before him, whatever its character or temperature — he devoted himself to amusing, entertaining, diverting in any way the little maiden. She, on her part, saw through his devices, and would have wearied of his transparent and simple efforts on her behalf; these, however, in reality attained their end, by causing her to forget herself in her own desire to show him her appreciation of his devotion.

There was one topic, moreover, upon which these two, the childlike man and the womanly child, were never tired of hearing each other talk, and that was the Life and Letters, so to speak, of John Kent.

Mr. Pettingill had the most extravagant ideas as to the boy’s probable growth in physical stature since his departure.

“I should n’t wonder now,” he would say, “if

John was most six feet tall by this time, and handsome, Miss Dorrie, and" — then something in her face, whose gentle alphabet he was fast learning, bade him stop, while she turned among her pillows and began fumbling in a small writing-desk which Gilbert had made for her.

"What do you want, Miss Dorrie?"

"His last letter. I've found it. Oh, here it is!" as she ran rapidly over one page after another.

She did not show him, after all, what she had been looking for. It was this sentence: "You'd laugh, Dorrie, to see how tall Edith has grown (she has me call her 'Edith' now, you know), since I first saw her. She's nearly up to me. We measured this morning."

"Have a game of checkers?" Waldo would inquire anxiously, seeing that something was amiss, and offering this mild prescription as a sort of mental aconite.

Then Dorrie would give him a patient smile and, apparently, immerse herself in the game, all the time seeing John so far, far away with the tall, beautiful girl, strong and healthy, at his side.

Mr. Pettingill, meanwhile, threw himself heart

and soul genuinely into the moves before him, puckering up his lips, shrewdly avoiding traps set for him by his wary little opponent, and following the fortunes of each discoid "man" until he could lean back with a sigh of relief and the request, in which he vainly strove to conceal his exultation, "Crown him, Miss Dorrie, please!"

So, Waldo Pettingill, when thou, with thy long and ungainly person, expressionless face, and out-grown coat, shiny with much wear, shalt have made thy last move along thy level plain of life, shalt thou enter the king-row and receive thy crown!

"It's your turn, Miss Dorrie," continues Mr. Pettingill, settling himself to meet the new responsibilities devolving upon royalty.

Dorrie at last had to bend her energies upon the game, not, indeed, to win, but to keep from winning. It was almost impossible not to beat Mr. Pettingill; but by severe application she managed it once or twice of an evening.

In more ways than one it was a hard winter, a fearfully hard winter, for Thomas Wilson. With Gilbert at his side and plenty of work at the shop, he successfully kept his enemy at bay. But the strain told upon him. A builder may

cling to the dizzy heights of a church spire, following his calling year after year, until such posts of danger are to him as child's play; but let him slip once, hanging for a moment between heaven and earth, and saved by a hair's-breadth, and the next day's work aloft will be a different matter.

Wilson was thankful that Hurlburt did not appear. He had seen him once or twice at a distance, but had succeeded in avoiding a meeting. In each case Whelp, going before the man as pilot fish are said to precede their ugly master, gave timely warning of his approach.

Worn with the day's toil and the never absent sense of danger — though he knew nothing of the haunt of the thieves in his neighbor's premises — Thomas would return to his house at night, not with the fleet steps of Mr. Pettingill, but as slowly and heavily as an old man. There was no Dorrie to meet him now, and he missed the little one-footed patter across the kitchen floor more than he could tell. At times he had a great longing for his old home in Maine; the pink flush of apple blossoms, the soft, shadow-flecked grass in the orchard, the breath and dream-songs of the pines, the fitful tinkle of cow bells at dusk, the clear whistle of whip-poor-wills as they

called and answered from thicket and stone — these memories would come before him vividly as he thought of the old farm, the battlefield where he had won his first great victory. He began to talk with Martha about leaving the city in the spring ; but she would point up to Dorrie's room and shake her head, even as the low, patient laugh of the child would ring out feebly, over some irresistible blunder of Mr. Pettingill's.

I have not yet spoken of the sweet spirit that cheered them all, and kept their faces from deepest clouds, in these dark days. That Lady Courtley was in the house was always, of itself, a joy to Dorrie, though she were invisible at the time. There was that about the lady that made life, to all who knew her, a higher and nobler thing. She could hardly enter a room, it seemed, without making her presence felt, to its utmost recess, as if by a subtle emanation of ladyhood. No, I will not join those who decry the term "Lady" and would substitute "Woman." The latter, in that it stands for the noble deeds of her gentle sex, is a grand term, but "Lady" is grander — the "loaf-giver," in its Anglo-Saxon parentage — truly, as in this lady's case, the giver of the bread of life, so far as she received it from the hands of her Lord.

During the day, while the men were away, she spent as much time as possible in Dorrie's room, sometimes sitting there silently for hours; sometimes interesting her with tales of her own childhood; best of all, talking to her about John.

It may seem strange, perhaps, that the child did not talk more about her soul, earnest little Christian that she was. But Dorothy's hold of life was strong, and her clear vision refused to distinguish the present from the hereafter, as different experiences to be undergone. She was perfectly confident that she loved God, and her neighbor as herself; and that God loved her. She felt that she had naughty thoughts sometimes, but, as she invariably repented soon after, she was sure that she was forgiven, and that Jesus, who once died, and now was living, to save her from sin, would take good care of her soul, if she would let him; which she did, utterly. She no more thought of doubting her future home-taking to the Father of Lights than she would have questioned her own father, whether he would allow her to remain in the old house. To her it was all "kingdom of heaven," and she would have thought it ill-becoming in a daughter to complain of the one room in the palace where she now

was, or to ask for another until it should be offered to her, as she had not the slightest doubt it ultimately would.

They had a quiet, not altogether sad Thanksgiving day, in which Martha did her best to reproduce (in reduced form, like the reprints from foreign illustrations in our cheaper magazines) the old-fashioned dinner, with its turkey, chicken-pie, and all their savory adjuncts. Dorrie was brought down in her chair by Mr. Pettingill, who earnestly requested that office, and became, in consequence of his exertions, so warm and trembly that he had to omit chicken-pie altogether.

Four weeks later, on Christmas day, she was too "tired" to be moved, and the family were fain to satisfy themselves by sampling the various dishes on the table and carrying them up to her in microscopic quantities.

They had a bit of Christmas holly and evergreen about the rooms to cheer each other up, and Mr. Kent came out of his self-absorption long enough to tell them a right good Christmas story in the afternoon; the day being, as you will find by reference to your diaries, clear and cold, with just enough snow on the ground to give Boston a holiday aspect. Mrs. Roberts joined them at

supper, and was provided with a chair with rounds in front ; it being a peculiarity of Terry's, utterly unaccounted for to this day, that no sooner did that estimable landlady enter a room where his dogship lay than he immediately rose and began to worry her feet, thereby causing her untold mental anguish (Mr. Pettingill being present, she was unable to protect herself) and driving her to chairs with elevated rounds, as I have said.

I cannot dismiss this account of Christmas day without reference to the present which Mr. Pettingill purchased for Dorrie. This was a book with bright blue covers, devoted to a description of India, and containing lifelike plates of Bengal tigers in every possible attitude and bloodthirsty occupation. Upon these illustrations Mr. Pettingill dwelt with such peculiar relish that Dorrie shuddered ; an effect which appeared to give him infinite pleasure.

January, February, March, and affairs in the gray-roofed relic of ancient days changed but little. Dorrie was alternately better and worse, her life glowing and paling like the embers on Gilbert Kent's hearth ; but the outer line of gray always gaining inward.

In the latter part of April a letter came from John, saying that he hoped to reach home early

in June. Dorrie rallied wonderfully at this, and astonished her friends by her rapid gain for a few weeks. Mr. Pettingill was so much encouraged that he dug over and replanted the flower-garden and arranged in her window an elaborate hanging carrot, which was to grow upside down.

May passed, and the first warm, languid days of June swiftly succeeded one another, only to bring another letter from across the seas, saying that John's coming must be postponed for a while longer; and Dorrie drooped as rapidly as she had gained strength. In the garden the weeds soon grew high and rank; Mr. Pettingill had no heart to raise flowers for—he would not allow himself to think what.

When he was banished from the sick-chamber, he would go up into the cupola with Terry, and talk to him as to a brother, the dog turning his head very much on one side, in his efforts to comprehend, and occasionally reaching up to lap the tearful face above him in sheer sympathy for the sorrow which he dimly recognized in Waldo's tones.

Thomas Wilson came and went, the shadow of his temptation and fall always over him; remorse crying out upon him day and night, "You drove him into exile; you have killed her!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

JULY SECOND.

ON the morning of July second, Gilbert Kent went to his work as usual. An errand to a Dock Square hardware store took him up toward the newspaper offices at about ten o'clock. As he approached the corner of Cornhill and Washington Street he noticed people hurrying uptown, with pale, anxious faces, as if the scene of some terrible calamity were before them. Swept by an unexplained impulse, he turned aside and followed in their footsteps. There was no loud talk; even the noise of vehicles in the street seemed under a strange spell of silence.

Suddenly the shrill voice of a newsboy tore through the hush:—

“Herald Extra! eleven o'clock! ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT GARFIELD!”

Gilbert's blood surged hotly through his veins and back to the heart. His ears rang as if they were beaten upon like anvils. Dazed, not know-

ing what he did or whither he went, he drifted onward with the crowd.

Washington Street was wedged full of people in front of the newspaper offices, reading the bulletins and talking in low, anxious tones. Friends hardly recognized each other's changed, hoarse voices. But nobody waited to find a friend. Each man spoke to those nearest him; all were brothers, clinging together in their common grief.

“PRESIDENT GARFIELD SHOT AND FATALLY
WOUNDED THIS MORNING!
ARREST OF THE ASSASSIN!”

Those were the first words, in great purple letters, that Gilbert read on the bulletin.

He waited for no more, but made his way out of the crowd and hurried back to tell his partner the terrible news. Wilson was visibly affected, but the blow did not fall upon him as it had upon Kent, who was roused from his dreamy, sluggish mood, and down whose cheeks the tears rolled as he stood with clenched fists telling Thomas all he knew about the affair and smoothing with trembling hands the crumpled newspaper he had bought as he left the crowd.

He could not work, but hurried back to get fresh news. There was little to be learned, save that the assassin's name was "Kitto," afterward reported "Gitto," and at last correctly spelled out "Charles J. Guiteau," a half-crazy office-seeker, disappointed at the result of the recent election and his own failure to obtain preferment.

At three o'clock word came that the President was indeed dangerously hurt but would recover. Men wept like children, for the second time on that memorable day,—this time for joy.

At eight o'clock dispatches arrived from Washington announcing that the President was dead.

Leaving the pale, awe-struck throng still dense about the news offices, Gilbert Kent, faint for loss of food and thoroughly unmanned by the afternoon's rapid transition from joy to grief, returned to his home.

They had not meant to tell Dorrie, but her quick perceptions divined that something was wrong and the news came out. Her eyes grew large and dark with excitement. She slept but little and in the morning was decidedly worse.

"Garfield is alive and better!" were the first words Gilbert heard as he awoke in the gray dawn of Sunday. He dressed hastily and went

out into the streets. "Thank God! thank God!" was on everybody's lips.

All over the land that day preachers stood in their pulpits with uplifted hands and trembling lips, beseeching the God of nations to spare the life of this man to his people; and ever at the close of the agonized prayer came the broken "Thy will be done."

Toward night the bulletins from the physicians in attendance at the capital were less encouraging in tone; with beating hearts the people turned again to a few hours of fitful slumber to hurry once more to the large centers of information.

It was Independence day, the Fourth of July; but no gun boomed or bell sent out its joyous peal. Groups of men, released from their daily routine of work by the holiday, gathered upon the street corners and discussed the darkening prospect. The worst fears were entertained for the immediate future of the Republic. The discontented partisans and politicians, who were still burning with the mortification of defeat in November, would stir up the disaffected elements throughout the States, fomenting open rebellion, and jarring asunder those harmonious relations which had been growing between the north and south.

With the Vice-President a new set of men would come into power, hostile to the peaceful and statesmanlike views of the dying President. Sedition and discord would shortly be fanned into flame by this scorching blast of excitement. The "dogs of war" were already tugging at their chains. Such were the common expressions on the street all through that awful, dumb Independence day of 1881.

Still came the alternating messages of hope and despair. Horse cars and vehicles of all sorts gave up any attempt to pass through the lower portion of Washington Street. Side by side with ragged urchins and shriveled, unkempt women stood gray-haired gentlemen in broadcloth, and waited upon the curbing or pavement for hours, while a sultry July sun poured down its rays upon them. The mighty presses of the Herald tore twenty-five tons of white paper into sheets in that single day; printed the news from Washington on them and scattered them broadcast over the land.

The streets resounded with the cries of news-boys: "Herald, extra! half-past nine o'clock!" Then a silence would fall on the crowd, followed by the shout, "Herald, extra! half-past eleven!"

and so on, one enormous edition after another, fluttering for a moment here and there in the throng and disappearing like snowflakes in the sea.

And now a bare-headed man emerges from the Globe office and fastens up a new bulletin.

“LATEST REPORTS FAVORABLE. HE HAS ASKED
FOR SOMETHING TO EAT.”

There is another silence, breathless and oppressive, while the eager crowd surges up, packing the street from side to side.

The bulletin is read. Some one in the street claps his hands and everybody claps. Somebody else cries aloud with a quiver in his voice, “Hooray!” and a grand, human, warm-hearted cheer goes up to heaven, such as those brick walls have never echoed, though they often have rung with savagely exultant cries of the same crowds on election nights, shouting hoarsely their party triumphs.

The papers cannot give all their telegraphic space to reports from Washington. From every quarter of the globe come dispatches to the stricken people that wait at the door of the chamber. Spain, Roumania, France, England,

Japan, Italy, Canada, and hosts of other great peoples are with one voice crying out against this black crime and sending their generous sympathy.

TO MRS. GARFIELD:—

Keep a good heart. God bless you. We are praying for you.

THE LADIES OF RICHMOND.

An ex-confederate soldier, blind and wounded, sends his sympathy and prayers for the President's recovery.

Aye, it is the "solid south," chivalrous and true-hearted to the core, joining hands with the north!

WINDSOR CASTLE.

The Queen is most anxious to learn as to the state of the President. Please wire the latest news.

Back and forth, beneath the waves of the ocean, speeds the lightning, the flaming fire which, in the hour of dread and trial, He has made his minister.

The continued excitement was bad for Dorrie. The family tried their best to exclude the President's condition, as a topic, from all conversation within the child's hearing. But it was of no use. It was in the very atmosphere, in the looks of those about her, in the chance words let fall by

the letter carrier on his rounds, in great flaring type at the head of every newspaper, one of which would occasionally stray into the house in the pockets of Mr. Pettingill's linen duster. And as the strength of the stricken man at Washington fluctuated so did that of this frail creature, restlessly turning from pillow to pillow in her armchair.

An adverse report from the board of physicians at the capital would give Dorrie a sleepless night; a rise in the temperature or a quickening of the pulse in the stalwart figure, which the whole civilized world was watching with constrained breath, called the feverish flush to the thin cheek of the crippled girl in the forsaken house, and left still weaker the little figure known to only the few who came and went each day across this forgotten and desolate inner-chamber in the great city.

The heat grew more and more oppressive. Rising from the baked, clayey soil around the old house, the vibrant waves of torrid atmosphere set all the dingy brick and granite walls about it a-quivering. Ill odors crept up from the wretched dwellings of the poor, not far away, and the narrow streets, where uncleanness and disease made their

noisome bed. Even the harbor sent no breath of coolness to the sick child, but lay leaden and gleaming under the blazing sun.

The leaves of the elm drooped, choked with dust that no refreshing rain would bathe away. Sounds of brawls and of wailing, suffering babies, and drunken oaths filled the air at nightfall — while around the old Maine farmhouse the thrushes were singing.

Still the President's pulse grew quicker and his strength waned. Still the pure stream of life, clear as crystal, ebbed away from the upper chamber in the forgotten house.

One afternoon late in July, Dorrie was sitting at her open window, her thin hands clasped loosely together, her eyes gazing out over the sea as was their wont. From afar, on every side, came a faint, dull roar.

"What is it, Lady?" asked Dorothy, rousing herself a little, and half turning to her faithful old friend who sat near by.

"What, dear, the noise? It's just the city streets, you know — the wheels and the horses."

"I must have been dreaming. I thought it was the ocean. Have you ever seen the waves on the shore, Lady?"

"Often, dear ; often — years ago."

"And the ocean stretching away, away off ?"

"Yes, Dorrie."

"So far that you couldn't see any other side at all ?"

"Only water and sky and ships."

"Oh," clasping her hands together again nervously, "if I could only sail off in a great ship like John — perhaps I could find him. Do you think I could find him, Lady ? Don't you think I could ?"

"Perhaps, dear."

"And when I'm better — I felt ever so much better this morning — can't I go ? Can't you all go, and find him ? Oh, he'll never come if you don't !"

Word had got into the house somehow that morning that Garfield was sinking rapidly ; as a result Dorrie's own condition had been more alarming than at any time before.

Mrs. Courtley now came close to her side, seeing that she was becoming nervously excited, and began one of her soothing, gentle songs, which no one ever heard from her but Dorrie.

For a while the child yielded to its influence, and closed her eyes, leaning back in her chair

and breathing feebly. But soon she became restless again, strangely restless, turning uneasily upon her pillows.

The afternoon had been intensely hot, but now as the sun went down, the white curtain fluttered softly inward, and a cool breath touched Dorrie's cheek.

She opened her eyes wide, and stretched out both arms toward the window.

"The wave-wind! The wave-wind!" she whispered in ecstasy. "I couldn't sail away into it, so it has come to me!"

As the words were on her lips the door of the room below opened and shut. A strangely familiar footstep sounded on the floor—came swiftly up the stairs.

With hand still outstretched, Dorrie turned, trembled, with lips apart, then sprang from her chair, and on her one thin, bare foot, her little white robe fluttering about her, would have reached the door, had not a pair of strong young arms caught her and a brown, loving face bent over her before she had advanced one step.

"Dorrie! Dorrie! I've come back!"

But Dorrie did not answer.



“Dorrie! Dorrie! I’ve come back!” — *Page 328.*

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE NEW DOCTOR.

AT first there was not one in the house who did not believe that Dorrie's longing had been granted, and that she had sailed away on the great, tireless ocean of life on whose borders we live, and to whose call she had so many times listened that long, weary summer. John, a tall bronzed fellow, now almost fourteen, laid the little form back tenderly among the pillows from which she had sprung, and covering his face with his arm, stumbled slowly down over the stairs.

Martha, whom he had seen when he entered, had followed him quickly up, and now joined her efforts to Lady Courtley's to renew the flickering flame of consciousness, if, indeed, it had not gone out forever.

As soon as John reached the ground floor his presence of mind returned. Flinging on his cap, he dashed off through the alley and along the well-known streets across Scollay Square, and up to the Tremont House, never stopping till he had

delivered a series of emphatic knocks at the door of a room in the second story.

"Come in!" called a strong, cheery voice. "Why, John, back again so soon? Nothing happened, I hope?" catching the look on his face. "All well at home?"

"Come!" gasped John breathlessly, catching up his companion's hat which lay on the table, and forcing it into his hand. "Oh, do hurry, Doctor McAllister! Dorrie's so sick! I don't know but she's — she's" —

He could not finish the sentence, but broke down with a bitter cry, and hid his face on his friend's shoulder, sobbing and weeping as he had not wept for years, aye, as he had never wept before. But only for a brief moment or two.

Harold, who had reached the hotel but an hour before from the New York train (they had come by that route from Liverpool to save time), was out in the street with him, and hastening to the rescue with John at his side, before the boy's tears had dried on his cheek.

Doctor McAllister went up the stairs alone to Dorrie's room, without even an introduction to Martha, or any one else in the house. The forms and ceremonies of daily life seem the veriest doll's

trappings in moments like these. A word of explanation to the women sufficed, and the practised hand of the young physician was at work with theirs.

While John waited in the kitchen Terry came in, and shortly afterward Mr. Pettingill. The former accepted the wanderer's return with that matter-of-fact mien with which the most sagacious and affectionate of dogs comport themselves on such occasions. Waldo, on the contrary, fully made up for any lack of enthusiasm on the part of the terrier, by his wild, though silent, demonstrations of joy over his friend.

After the first greeting, John explained Dorrie's condition and Doctor McAllister's presence in the house, while Mr. Pettingill poured into his ears the story of her long illness.

"I don't dare to tell her a word about the President," he concluded, "for just as sure as he's took worse, she's worse."

After a long half-hour of anxious waiting, Harold came down. He told John and Mr. Pettingill, to whom he was duly presented, that Dorrie was conscious, though very feeble, and that it would not do for her to see him again that night. He, McAllister, would come again

in the morning, thus virtually taking charge of the case, to John's great relief.

At the meeting of John with his father we will not be present ; it was too sacred a scene for any one but God to look upon ; nor with Thomas Wilson ; for it was too full of painful memories for me to wish to record its details in these pages.

After supper all but Martha, who was with her daughter, remained in the old kitchen, talking eagerly, though quietly, of the experiences of the past year.

Late at night, before the group broke up, Gilbert Kent opened the big family Bible which the Wilson's had brought from Maine, and read aloud the One Hundred and Third Psalm.

That night John climbed the stairs to the old chamber under the garret eaves, and as he slept he dreamed the old dream of his boat ; only there was another in it now — a woman-child lying before him with white face and closed eyes.

Early the next morning a firm step on the path outside the door announced the arrival of Harold, who had thrown himself into the case of the crippled girl with that earnestness that had won for him his already brilliant reputation. As yet, however, Dorrie was hardly more than a "case"

to him; he had not yet seen the lovely soul within the frail body which he now bent all his energies to save.

Before going up he had a long talk with her parents and Lady Courtley about her sickness, asking for every detail they could remember since her injury and the operation in the hospital. When they reached, in their account, the events of the preceding summer, which John had narrated to him in full over and over again, the doctor interrupted Wilson's stammering and fragmentary statement with "I know, I know. She had a great shock, from anxiety for some one she loved, and John's leaving home. Go on from there, please."

When they had finished, he closed the book in which he had been taking full notes of dates and symptoms, and sat a few minutes in deep thought.

"I cannot tell," he said at length, "whether her life can be saved. The most dangerous element in your daughter's illness, Mr. Wilson, I must say to you frankly, is the absence of any strongly developed disease. It is, so far as I can tell, a general ebbing of vitality from a constitution which barely held its own, after the original injury and amputation, until this new shock

gave her nerves a strain from which she could not rally. I understand you to say that she is not now under a regular course of treatment, your physician having gone abroad and left only general directions, and those in case of emergency. I am ready to do my best to save her, if you wish me to try."

Thomas motioned to the stairway and Harold went up. When he came down, his face was very grave.

Day after day he repeated his visits without apparent result, save that Dorrie seemed to grow no worse. She liked the new doctor cordially and at once, which was a point gained. But the tragedy still dragging out its slow scenes at Washington wore upon her. They could no longer keep the official bulletins from her, for if she did not hear from her great companion in suffering, she grew excited and feverish, until the paper was brought.

The news grew steadily worse. The little candle began to flicker; Doctor McAllister came twice instead of once a day, through the stifling sultry heats and fever exhalations of August.

At last he said firmly to Mr. Wilson : —

"Sir, there is but one chance left. Miss Dorrie

must be removed from this place and taken into the country."

On the same day the physicians at Washington consulted long and reported: "The President will be taken to Long Branch as soon as suitable preparations can be made for his removal."

The President was dying; John Kent looked into Harold's eyes, and dared not translate what he read there.

One week from that day it was settled; the Wilsons would return to the old farm among the Maine pines.

Dorrie listened with a spark of reviving interest to the plans, then hid her face in the pillow.

When asked tenderly why she was sorry, she only pointed out at the open window; and they knew it was because she was leaving the ocean, on which she longed to sail, so far, oh! so far away.

CHAPTER XXV.

A MEMORY.

FOUR days before that set for the departure, John called upon Edith Yarbrough. Their voyage home had been, on the whole, a pleasant one, though it had been clouded by anxiety as to the state in which they should find their distracted country on their return.

The cordial relations between John and his friends had been maintained until the Cephalaria had rounded the southern point of Ireland and was fairly headed for New York. Then Edith began to withdraw slightly, and seek companionship among some schoolgirls who were returning from a tour on the continent. Although John missed her society, he was not particularly hurt by her conduct, as it never occurred to him that its reason could be found in the fact that the new friends were wealthy, and that he was a poor boy, in reality traveling on her mother's charity.

So he had made friends with the sailors and the

more intelligent steerage passengers, and had a pretty good time of it after all in helping others, in spite of Edith's haughty airs.

As they neared the Highlands, and the smoke of the great metropolis hung in swarthy folds against the sky, on the afternoon of their arrival, Edith's friends had deserted her, and were busy in their staterooms with a deal of chatter over trunks and duties and "wharf-parties" to meet them, etc.

When John drew near the Boston girl, standing rather disconsolately by the rail alone, he received a more cordial welcome than had fallen to his lot since leaving Queenstown.

In real fact, she was genuinely glad to see him, and among other pleasant speeches impulsively asked him to be sure to come to her house as soon as she returned from the mountains, which would be about September first.

John was sorry she was going away before seeing Dorrie, and told her so, whereupon her ladyship became frigid again, to her comrade's great perplexity. She was not quite old enough to appear more cordial at the mention of Dorrie's name. John, notwithstanding these little flitting shadows and sunshines across the fair young face

before him, accepted her invitation in a quite matter-of-fact way, as if he had expected it; and would probably have gone without any invitation at all.

He had worked in his father's shop during August, spending at least half of each day with Dorrie, who was never weary of hearing him tell of his adventures abroad and the wonderful places he had visited.

A colored man answered John's ring at the Commonwealth Avenue house, opening the door a few inches and peering out through the crack at the boy.

"Well?" said the man sharply, supposing him to be a messenger from a down-town store.

"Is Miss Edith at home?"

"Yes," said the servant, holding out his hand for a note or parcel, which John, however, did not produce.

"I want to see her, if you please," said he, with one of his rare smiles.

"Well, you can't see her now. She's engaged."

"Tell her John Kent is at the door," said John, turning coolly, and gazing out at the children playing on the avenue.

But before the man could deliver his message,

or even shut the inner door, there came a swift rustle of skirts down from the second landing where somebody had evidently been listening to the colloquy.

“Why, John, how glad I am you’ve come! Do come right in, and tell me what you’ve been doing this last month. It seems ages since I’ve seen you!”

John was rather bewildered, though altogether delighted at the warm greeting. The truth was, Edith had been in the society of a lot of overgrown boys, who fancied themselves young men, for the last fortnight, and though they answered well enough to fill seats on a tallyho, or to complete a set at tennis, she found them insufferably dull when she was left to talk ten minutes with any one of them. She was afraid she had been too short with John, and hardly ventured to hope that she should see him. “He’ll be too bashful, or too proud,” she thought, “to come into this elegant house.”

In which surmise, as you see, she was quite mistaken.

Edith took him into an exquisitely furnished reception room, and seated him near her in a sumptuous armchair.

No sooner was he ensconced among its soft cushions, than there came over him a strange sense of having been in exactly that same place before.

Now he knew that he had never set foot in that house, and that such a previous experience was simply an impossibility. He tried, therefore, to throw off the queer feeling, and keep up with his lively entertainer's questions and saucy comments. She was gracious enough to inquire for everybody at home, and her pretty face grew very sober as John told of Dorrie's grave illness.

"Do you really expect to go away, then?" she asked, looking up at him.

Though she was a full year older than he, he was now considerably the taller of the two.

"Yes, Miss Ed— Yes, Edith," he corrected himself, not unwillingly, in answer to a laughing flash of her gray eyes. "We're going next Tuesday, if nothing happens."

"Tuesday—that's the sixth. How soon! Will Dr. McAllister go too? I haven't seen a sign of him since we got back."

"Yes, he'll go with us on the cars, so as to help take care of Dorrie. Nobody can lift her as he does. Then he'll come back after a day or two, if she's no worse."

"I wish he'd — What are you staring at, John Kent?"

"I did n't mean to," said John, flushing up.

"Well, what was it?"

"Why, I've somehow got the feeling that I've been in this room before. It's foolish, because I know I never was in such a beautiful place."

"Just come here," said Edith, gratified. "This picture is a real Bougereau. Isn't it lovely? That soft brownish autumn one is Enneking's."

The names were utterly strange to John. He could not help preferring the latter picture of the two, though Edith had dwelt with such impressiveness on the Frenchman's name.

"Here are some miniatures," continued Edith, opening a little cabinet. "They are mostly family portraits. I don't suppose you'll care much about them."

She was closing the cabinet door, when John darted upon one of the dainty miniatures, with a cry of amazement.

"What's the matter now?" demanded Edith, with more force than elegance.

"Who is that?" stammered John, hardly knowing what he said, in his excitement.

"Why, I don't know; some niece or second cousin of grandmother's, I believe."

"Mother," to Mrs. Yarbrough, who was just entering on her husband's arm, "here's John Kent, making great eyes at that pretty Miss — what's her name? The portrait's fifty years old, John," she added with a laugh.

John was formally presented to Mr. Yarbrough, who proved to be a most genial, unpretending man, with simple and cordial manners. Then the conversation about the miniature was resumed, not quite willingly on Mrs. Yarbrough's part; but John was persistent.

"I've a special reason for asking, ma'am," said he earnestly.

"Why, that was a Miss Martyn. Her mother and Mr. Yarbrough's grandmother were very dear friends. No; she was no relation to us, Edith — but they had some misunderstanding and drifted apart. This girl's mother died in extreme want — 't was very sad — and grandmother never got over it. The portrait was painted at grandmother's expense when Augusta, that was her name, was about twenty years old — just before the quarrel between the older folks. After Mrs. Martyn died, the girl went to live with some distant relative did n't she, Alexander? — in California, I think — and grandmother never heard of her from that day."

"Was she ever married, ma'am?"

"I always thought she must have been, and that's why we could n't find her by her old name. But I don't know. Why are you so concerned about all this, John?"

"Because," said the boy, with dancing eyes, "this is the very Lady Courtley I told you about on the North Star. She always signs her name, 'Augusta M. Courtley.' She's an old lady now, but she looks just like that picture."

"Well, well, that's strange enough," said Mr. Yarbrough, with a jolly laugh. "We must see if something can't be done for her, for grandmother's sake."

John shook his head doubtfully at that.

"I think she might like the portrait, sir," he said, never guessing that the miniature had cost at least a hundred dollars.

"Take it to her, by all means," put in Mr. Yarbrough, before his wife could say a word. "Grandmother would want us to do all that we could, I know."

"Here's grandmother's desk," said Edith. "It came when I was a little girl, and it was in her room to the very day when she died."

John's head swam, as he looked at the quaint

piece of furniture, with the renewed sensation of repeating a former experience.

"Did n't I hear you say something about looking through your grandmother's desk for a will?" he asked, slowly turning to Edith.

"Why, yes. How funny you look! She always said she had a will somewhere, and we supposed of course it would surely be in that desk. But come to look, there was n't a sign of it."

John advanced toward the desk, still in a dazed way, while the rest regarded him curiously.

"May I open that third drawer?"

"Certainly, my boy," said the gentleman. "There's nothing but a few prints in it."

He pulled the drawer open carefully, until a very small nick on one of the sides came into view. Then he reached in (doing all this in a slow, mechanical way), and made a quick motion of his wrist; when lo, a small, square drawer shot out into the larger one, from its side.

They leaned forward eagerly to see what would come next.

A crumpled, dusty sheet of foolscap, half covered with writing. The first words were: "I, Cordelia L. Yarbrough, being of sound mind, do hereby make my last will and testament."

A little farther down on the paper was this clause.

“5th. I do give and bequeath to Augusta Martyn, the daughter of my honored and unhappy friend Rachel Martyn, if she be alive at the time of my death, and to her heirs forever, or in case of her death before my own, then to her lawful heirs at law, in equal shares, and to their heirs forever, that lot of land, and the house upon it, which came into my possession at the conclusion of the case of *Barker vs. Brooks*, and concerning which my aforesaid grandson, Alexander Yarbrough, is fully informed.”

“Why,” exclaimed Edith, “then your friend owns the very house you live in, John!”

“A pretty way to do,” said the millionaire, with pretended fierceness, “to come and take property away from under my very eyes in this way. How did you know about that secret drawer, you young scamp?”

“I’ve just thought it out,” said John. “Nearly five years ago, when I was in father’s shop, he was making this very desk, or one exactly like it. He said it was for an old lady on Commonwealth Avenue, and nobody was to know about the secret drawers. I tried not to see, but I suppose

I did, without thinking, for it came to me just now, like a dream. There's a cup like the one Lady Courtley gave me," he added, pointing to a costly collection of bric-à-brac on the shelves of an *étagère*.

"Marvels upon marvels!" cried the rich banker. "Upon my soul, it's like a story-book. Kent, my boy, you must dine with us. There's the bell."

The will proved to be perfectly good, notwithstanding some pretty loudly hinted objections by one or two people who were indirectly interested. The Yarbroughs acted nobly in the matter, parting with the valuable piece of property without a complaint, and assisting Lady Courtley in proving her claim. Mr. Yarbrough at once recognized the name of a well-known Boston lawyer as one of the witnesses, and on calling at his office, found that the will had been duly drawn up and signed only a few months before. This information was given by the junior partner; the senior, who had full charge of the matter, was now abroad and had not heard of the death of his client.

Lady Courtley was at once informed of the change in her fortunes. It proved that she had been married in California, and that her husband

had died there, after a happy but childless home life of four years. She had then returned to the east, and had supported herself upon the small sum left her by her husband, and by such means of obtaining an honorable living, not as ample in those as in modern days, as were open to a gentlewoman.

She called upon the Yarbroughs on the day following the discovery of the will, and was so warmly received that she was both touched and charmed by their magnanimity. She and Edith became friends at once.

What she should do with her newly acquired fortune she did not know, nor did she worry about it, leaving all her papers for the time in Mr. Yarbrough's hands.

Her own mind, and those of her nearest friends, were occupied with the one incessant thought: Could they move Dorrie safely one hundred miles from Boston; and would it be for life or death?

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE YELLOW DAY.

AS early as five o'clock on the morning of Tuesday, September 6, the Wilsons were all awake and astir. John Kent and his father also emerged from their rooms, and assisted in the final preparations for leaving the old house. It had been decided that the premises should be left entirely vacant, as it was uncertain when any of the household would return. Thomas secretly resolved to remain in his native town if the least opening could be found there for earning an honest living at his trade. A little more than a year before he would have scorned to leave the city and its allurements, judging such a withdrawal cowardly desertion of a post of danger. But he had learned, of late, to pray with his whole heart the prayer, "Lead us not into temptation," and to recognize the fact that one of the helps which God gives his fighting soldiers is that of condition and surrounding. For a man to remain where he is needlessly exposed to the shots of the

enemy is not bravery, but foolhardiness. Thomas Wilson humbly admitted his weakness, and, knowing that nowhere on earth could he wholly escape toil and struggle, was content to ask for a less distinguished post than the forefront of the battle. It is such men, whom, when they have overcome, the great Commander often places in the van, and gives them opportunity to regain their self-respect by doing glorious battle for the right, after all.

Mr. Pettingill had been putting off a ten days' vacation, offered him by his employers, to accompany Dorrie, who, indeed, would have sorely missed her faithful attendant. Lady Courtley would also be with the Wilsons on their journey north, but would soon return, if she could be spared, to conclude arrangements and complete the necessary formalities for the transfer of the Yarbrough property ; as well as to decide as to its disposition, and select a residence for herself.

Gilbert Kent would remain in Boston, boarding at Mrs. Roberts' for the present, and taking care of the shop and its interests. John went with Dorrie, as a matter of course.

During Saturday and Monday nearly all the furniture in the house had been removed to its

various destinations. Lady Courtley, availing herself of Mr. Yarbrough's kind offer to advance five hundred dollars for her personal expenses, had insisted on providing for Dorrie's transportation to the depot as comfortable a carriage as could be procured in the city ; accompanying her herself, together with Martha and Mr. Wilson.

Dr. McAllister was on hand by the time they had finished breakfast. Cool and quiet as if they were but to walk around the garden instead of taking a journey of a hundred miles, he inspired them all with courage, and actually made Dorrie laugh before he had been in the house five minutes.

She could not keep back the tears though, nor could Martha herself, as they all passed out of the door, locking it behind them, and walked slowly down the path towards the outside world.

John turned for a last look at the old home. Already it was to him a part of a far-off past. It seemed no more possible ever to go back and live there again than to resume a dream where it was broken off.

There was the cupola where he had found himself alone at night ; the garden he had helped plant and tend ; the window from which his

gentle playmate had so often watched for her chickens and for his own home-coming at close of day. Even now the gulls were wheeling about in the sky overhead with now and then a faint, wild cry, as if they knew they should no more see the white face turned up to them ; that the old house would slowly molder away, and weeds flaunt in the garden, and at last the whole scene of this once happy and serene home life would vanish, as a child's sand house, before the resistless tide of Time and the advance of the city's iron heel.

Oh, sweet, sad cries of the gulls ! Oh, dusty patient leaves, dumb and motionless in the still heat of the sultry day ! Oh, aged, aged home, over whose worn threshold so many children have crept, prattling, to the feverish unrest of life, calling them dully from the far-off city streets. Oh, suffering, drooping child figure in the strong man's arms, waving a feeble hand in farewell to you all ! Oh, blessed love of the great Physician, who, in saddest and dreariest hours when the soul is sick unto death and the heart's beating is muffled and the universe itself has no home for us, then holds us in the everlasting arms and bears us up lest we dash our foot against a stone,

and leadeth us in green pastures and by still waters, and restoreth our souls!

At the street entrance Mrs. Courtley's carriage was waiting, and the ladies, with Thomas, entered it quickly and were driven away, while the rest of the party with Terry hurried on foot to meet them at the depot.

So absorbed had they been in the preparations for leaving, that no one thus far had noticed a singular effect in the atmosphere. It was John who first called attention to it.

"Father," he said, "what makes it so dark? Do you suppose we're going to have a storm?"

"It looks like it, my son. I heartily hope it won't strike you at the end of your journey."

"I've been noticing the sky," observed Harold, striding along so fast that the others could hardly keep up with him, Mr. Pettingill, in particular, being entirely debarred from taking part in the conversation by the hurried pace; "there's something strange about it."

"Yaller!" Waldo managed to ejaculate, as they slackened their speed a moment at a street crossing.

The air was oppressive in the extreme, hot, close, and sticky. Little by little a yellowish hue

overspread the sky and hung like a noisome mist over every object. Already men were beginning to light the gas in their offices, the flame showing a dazzling white in the midst of the prevailing murky tint.

People in the streets glanced at the clouds, wiped their foreheads, and hurried on to their destinations with disturbed and anxious faces. Some predicted a tornado, some an earthquake. A few believed the day of judgment was at hand; while some regarded the yellow sky with superstitious dread, reminding one another in awe-struck tones that at that moment the nation's dying chief was being removed from his city home to the sea, and that the very "heavens were dark" from some strange, unearthly sympathy with the closing act of the tragedy.

Gilbert Kent and his party lost no time in dismal forebodings or inquiries.

They reached the Boston and Maine depot only a few minutes after the arrival of the carriage, which had rolled away. Dorrie was in her father's arms in the waiting-room. They now all walked down the long platform to the head of the train, where they entered a Pullman car—another extravagance of Lady Courtley's, who, as yet,

certainly had not displayed much of the arrogance of riches. This newly appointed steward began at once to spend her Master's money as quietly and faithfully as if she had held office for years.

Mr. Pettingill demurred a little at entering the sumptuous car, furtively glancing at his boots, and smoothing his docile hair, out of respect for the carpet and mirrors, for no one else was in the Pullman as yet.

Meanwhile the omens without grew more uncanny and direful in their clammy, silent yellowness. A rush of wind, or even a clap of thunder or glittering sword of lightning would have been a relief. The sensation was one of smothering.

As John stood on the platform, the gas-lighted depot itself seemed a small section of natural day, while out-of-doors, seen through the open end of the train-house, looked like a huge, gloomy room, which they were about to enter. His father stood beside him, tall and silent, gravely regarding the strange appearances about him; but his heart, after all, was with the boy, and when he spoke, presently, it was not of the weather, but of John's immediate future.

"Son, have you thought what you shall do, after the summer is over?"

“Not very much, father. About the same as I’ve been doing, I suppose; I’d like to go to school.”

“And college?”

“I don’t think so, sir.”

“What do you want to be, John? A lawyer or a merchant?”

“I think, father, I’d like to do just what you have done. I’d like to be a carpenter who always made straight boxes and tight roofs. Do you mind, sir, because I don’t care to be a lawyer, or a minister, or anything else?”

“No, son. What you do is not of great consequence, so long as it is honorable. How you do it is what will be watched. Think these things over, my boy, while you are away. When you come back, you shall go to school for a time. Good-by — take good care of Dorrie, and may God take care of you both!”

A few minutes later the train started. Dorrie had not traveled by rail since she was old enough to remember anything about it, and was now greatly excited over the novelty of the motion and the scenes, the odd hue of the atmosphere only adding one more element of strangeness and unreality to the journey.

They rolled swiftly out over bridges, from which Dorrie had a final glimpse of her loved sea; then across salt marshes, along the base of wooded hills, farther and farther away from the city.

Dr. McAllister was constantly on the watch for any alarming symptom, and by previous agreement telegraphed to Gilbert, from a large town a little more than half-way to their destination.

"All well so far. She bears the journey bravely. Keep good courage."

At little country stations where the train paused, and hot breaths of air came in through the windows, they could hear the crickets chirping sleepily, though it was high noon. Grass appeared as if colored artificially by Paris green, and looked like theatrical foliage. A party of gay young girls stood chattering on the platform, but their bright ribbons were of dull and ugly colors, and their laughing faces were ghastly. Harold could not but think, with a shiver, as they shrieked with glee at one another's changed countenances, that they resembled a group of the newly dead, making fearful merriment over their loss of identity.

Nothing of this, however, appeared in his talk with Dorrie. Both he and John endeavored in

every way to divert her from any apprehensive view of the weather, and made light of it as if it were quite the ordinary accompaniment of a railway journey.

Mr. Pettingill was himself so absorbed in gazing from the window that his sensations remained purely subjective, and did not seriously affect either the gayety or solemnity of the rest.

While Dorrie's train was roaring, hissing, shrieking its way northward, a similar messenger bore the President toward Long Branch. Dispatches were thrown from his train at different points, and posted at once on bulletins in all the large cities of the Union. The train was special, and had a clear track the whole way. The vast population wandered uneasily to and fro, under the yellow sky, unable to work steadily, for the darkness and anxiety, wondering whether Garfield would reach the end of his journey alive. At ten minutes past one, word was flashed throughout the length and breadth of the land that the President had arrived and seemed no worse for the trip.

At almost precisely the same moment, the north-bound train slowed up at East Branch station, and Dr. McAllister, carrying Dorrie, led the way out to the platform and the coach that was waiting for them.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MORNING.

WHEN John awoke, next morning, the sun was shining brightly through a dozen tiny panes of glass and drawing upon the snow-white counterpane a corresponding network with its cheerful beams, as different from the dull yellow of the day before as gold from copper.

It was some time before he could remember where he was; the paper on the wall, with its pale pink nosegays, the uncarpeted but cleanly swept and shining floor, the tall chest of drawers looking at him, with all its brass knockers like curious eyes; and a funny little washstand, surmounted by a narrow, old-fashioned looking-glass with a crossbar that was so placed as to come exactly across the tip of your nose—all these were unfamiliar to him. Presently came a sound that brought him to his senses: the prolonged crow of a cock not far from his room answered almost immediately by another chanticler in the distance.

He ran to the window and looked out with delight welling up in his heart.

From beneath him a field of rich grass stretched away, its myriad blades glistening with dew and stirred by fitful, laughing ripples in the morning breeze. Beyond was a rim of white birches and young oaks, and beyond them the dark, pine forest, its fragrant heart and soft shadows promising such mysteries of joy as he had never yet known.

How strangely still it all was! In Boston his home had been isolated, but the listening ear could always catch the dull, ceaseless roar of traffic by day, while the nights were filled with ugly voices of their own.

His window was wide open and he could just hear a whisper of the wind cradled among the boughs of apple trees and lilac bushes. He longed to listen to it among the pines.

The repeated clarion of the feathered trumpeter reminded him that the daylight moments were passing, and every one was precious. He must launch himself into the clear-flowing stream of day; and there were others who needed the aid of his strong arm.

Dr. McAllister found Dorrie too exhausted to

leave her bed, but no more feeble than he had expected after such unusual effort. He remained with the Wilsons three days, and then went up to the city, promising to return in a week or two. The report he carried to Gilbert was encouraging. One thing he was firm about. He would have no word concerning the President's condition brought to the house. Dorrie herself was informed of this decision and resigned herself to ignorance with not a little relief. It was as if a new nurse had been called to take charge of the sick room in her stead. From that moment she began very, very slowly to gain. When the bells were tolling for James A. Garfield, and President Arthur was hastily assuming his new duties on the nineteenth and twentieth of September, the sick girl knew nothing of it; nor did she learn of the brave President's death till a fortnight later.

Mr. Wilson's father and mother, now more than threescore and ten years old, but hale and hearty still, were somewhat "flustered," as they confided to each other, by the sudden influx of company. But they were the soul of hospitality, and fell in love with John and Dorrie at once; Mr. Pettingill they mildly liked; Terry they endured. Mrs.

Courtley won their hearts, as a matter of course, but she would not stay with them more than one night, as she saw that they were already overcrowded. She made arrangements with a neighbor, only a few minutes' walk down the road, and remained a week there, spending most of the daylight hours with her friends. Then she too returned to Boston, bearing messages of love to Mr. Kent and Dr. McAllister.

When the latter returned and was ushered into the room where Dorrie was sitting, his face brightened the moment his eyes fell on her. When he came out, half an hour later, and grasped Mr. Wilson's hand, the father read in his light step and glad eyes the message, even before the words came, "Your daughter will not die."

The succeeding days and weeks were full of joy. Step by step Dorrie began to move about once more, followed by the delighted Terry and, during the last hours of his too brief vacation, Mr. Pettingill. John was at her side as in the dear old days.

September passed, and golden, hazy October stood

"Serenely thoughtful, with folded hands."

Still John lingered at the old farm, loth to

leave his friends, and exchange turf for bricks, the unseen incense of the pines for the smoke of the city.

Thomas Wilson found the neighbors willing and glad to employ him; so, sending for his tools, he erected a shop beside his father's house and began to grow young again at his work among chips and shavings.

From Edith Yarbrough came a long letter with several items of thrilling interest. Before leaving the city John had told his father all about his queer experience in the mousehole at night and the conversation he had overheard. As a result a conference had taken place between him and Mr. Yarbrough, at the end of which a noted detective was called in.

One week later, Edith wrote, the lost vases were recovered. The headquarters of the thieves in the junk shop was broken up and much valuable property found concealed in various parts of it. Hurlburt had managed to get wind of the raid and had escaped, together with all the gang (there were three of them) except Jagger. He was fairly trapped and captured in the secret room, and on being locked up, turned state's evidence. The early arrest of one or more of his associates was looked for.

Mr. Kent added to this account, in writing to his son, that a rather stout but persistent detective had actually wedged himself into the mouse-hole and had obtained, through the aperture which John had made, sufficient evidence to warrant the arrest. It would have been a comfort if Hurlburt had been taken also ; but he probably would not breathe Boston air for some time, the police remarked. He was in too much of a hurry, or in fear of identification, to take Whelp with him, and that sagacious beast thereupon became a regular fixture of O'Callaghan's saloon, reposing upon a bed of sawdust and depending chiefly for his amusement upon encounters with such rats and bare-legged children as chance threw in his way.

The new East Boston enterprise, on the withdrawal of Hurlburt's support, quietly failed ; and by one of those ironical coincidences, which are even more frequent in real life than in fiction, was converted into an undertaker's establishment ; to my mind an innocent and cheerful branch of trade compared with its predecessor.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CONCLUSION.

I SMILE as I write the title of this chapter ; for what do we know of conclusions ? Every life story is so interwoven with that of others, and overlapped by them, that the new is constantly beginning ere the old is at an end.

I fancy I hear some one say : " But you have been telling us more of Dorrie's life than of John's."

You forget that Dorrie's life *was* John's. The nearer friends are together the more are they one. John Kent's life could not have been told without that of his father and Dorothy Wilson. Perhaps when I tell you more of Dorrie's story, as I hope I may ere long, you will find, in like manner, portions of it where the happiness, the welfare, the motives, the daily life of her old playmate predominate over her own.

A few words will suffice, at present, to inform you of the whereabouts of some of those friends

who were stanchly true to both children in the hour of trial and danger.

Mrs. Courtley, on returning to Boston, bought a small house on one of the quiet streets of the West End, and at once set about furnishing it, not elegantly but comfortably. In this house she invited, with a generous warmth that could not be resisted, Mr. Kent, John, and Waldo Pettingill, to make their home.

Mr. Pettingill was so elated by the prospect that he had wild dreams of abandoning his business position, and setting up an opposition can-factory, — somewhere in the rear of the State House, I believe, — but was discouraged therein by Mrs. Roberts; and was finally induced to remain by an advance in his salary of fifty cents per week — the whole of which advance he invested, the first week, in a necktie of changeable silk, which he proposed to wear, evenings only, in Mrs. Courtley's presence; and the varying hues of which he firmly believed invested him with a deep and mysterious interest in the eyes of the fair sex.

He also purchased a checkerboard and spent much time in practicing alone, and playing elaborate games, Pettingill *versus* Pettingill. He found

it difficult, however, to bring these games to a close, as he was always foreseeing his opponent's wily moves, and could not resist the opportunity of balking them.

A surge of business toward her vicinity at about this time brought so many new boarders to Mrs. Roberts as to fill her house completely, and even afford her one or two "genteel" occupants of her choicer apartments—thereby rejoicing her honest heart. She continued to pay frequent visits to her former patrons, on which occasions Terry, still an important member of the family, was invariably locked out into the back yard, lest he should worry her feet, and give the poor soul, as she declared he often did, "a palpitation."

Among other occasional boarders, it should be mentioned, was a sailor—the only one she would allow in her house—named William Dawson, who now and then spent a night in Boston, and who was never weary of recounting to admiring audiences in the little parlor the details of John Kent's involuntary voyage to the Cape Verde Islands. At Lady Courtley's house he was always an honored guest.

Dorrie remained with her father and mother and the old people on the farm. Her letters and

Martha's told of renewed strength, of walks through field and wood; and of the faithful ministrations of Dr. McAllister, who by message, or, whenever he could leave his home practice for a day, by actual word and healing touch, continued to lead her back from the valley of shadows to the sunlit heights of life and health.

On the evening after his return to Boston, John Kent stood with his father, on the brow of a low hill just outside of the city proper. In front was a precipice where the ledges had been blasted away, leaving for some distance beyond a chaos of gray rock.

The sun had almost set. Not a cloud was in the sky, nor did the faintest sigh of breeze foretell the night or the winter to come. A few crimson-leaved vines straggled across the grass at their feet, and hung motionless over the brink of the cleft rock. Near by, in the branch of an aged and gnarled cherry tree, a dozen or more sparrows twittered cheerily—their eager interchange of comment almost the only sound of the clear October air.

For some time neither father nor son had spoken. Perhaps each felt that uttered word would have rather broken than intensified the

communion between them. They often stood in this way, the boy's hand nestling in his father's, a word or two at long intervals sufficing to keep their thoughts in the same channel. John would sometimes shut his eyes, just for the pleasure of knowing that his father was there in the dark, and that when he opened them he should see him at his side.

On this evening the father was the first to speak. They were looking out over half a hundred roofs, from which the black, sluggish curls of smoke rose against the blue depths of the eastern sky.

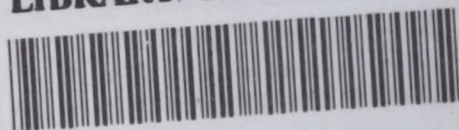
"It's a dull place, the city, is it not, my boy — after the fields and the pines?"

John opened his lips to reply; then caught his breath with delight, and pointed.

"Look, father!"

The sun's level rays, finding their way around the brow of a little eminence that had kept them back, rested full on the dingy roofs of the houses, and even as father and son looked upon them, touched the upward curling blurs of smoke, bathing them in glowing light, until from each humble and squalid dwelling arose a breath of rosy mist, floating away, transfigured, toward the blue heaven.

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